

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

Kushiro, Japan
9 to 16 June 1993

FOREWORD

The Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 1971) was hosted by Japan and held in Kushiro (Hokkaido) from 9 to 16 June 1993, in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 of the Convention. Seventy-two of the 77 States then Party to the Convention participated in the Fifth Meeting of the Conference. In addition, 23 non-Party States, as well as 111 governmental and non-governmental national and international organizations participated in the Conference as observers.

The Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties are presented in three volumes with versions in English, French, and Spanish. The first volume includes the summary reports of the Plenary Sessions and of the Workshops, the report of the Credentials Committee, the Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the list of participants, and the relevant Conference Documents.

The second volume will be devoted to the Conference Workshops. In addition to the Workshop reports, it will contain the corresponding overview papers (Conference Documents DOC. C.5.6 to DOC. C.5.9) as well as presentations and/or abstracts.

The third volume will contain the National Reports and the related Conference Document DOC. C.5.16. Pursuant to the instructions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the Conference Papers were reviewed by the Bureau after the meeting to incorporate the amendments adopted in the Plenary Sessions and to correct minor errors or discrepancies between the English, French, and Spanish texts.

In these Proceedings, States are designated in accordance with the list provided by the United Nations Secretariat at the time the original documents were prepared.

The Ramsar Bureau would like to express its appreciation to the

Central Government of Japan,
Hokkaido Provincial Government,
City of Kushiro,

for hosting the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and to the following institutions which supported the participation of a large number of delegates from developing countries:

Australia: Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB)
Canada: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
France: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Germany: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktor- sicherheit
(Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety)
Japan: Environment Agency
Japan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Netherlands: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Norway: Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Switzerland: Département fédéral des affaires étrangères (Federal Department of
Foreign Affairs)
Switzerland: Office fédéral de l'environnement, des forêts et du paysage (Federal
Office of the Environment, Forests and Landscape)
Sweden: Foreign Office
United Kingdom: Department of the Environment
United States: Department of State
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
World Heritage Fund (UNESCO)

The Ramsar Convention Bureau and the organizations which provided financial assistance have waived copyright.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

First Session: 9 June 1993, 0900 - 1250

Chairmen: Prof T. Satoo (Japan; from Agenda item V), Mr R. Smith (USA; Chairman of the Standing Committee; Acting Chairman for Agenda items I-V)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr R. Smith (USA; from item V), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela; from item V)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Dr M. Herzig Zürcher, Mr R.C. Prentice, Ms C.M. Samuel

Agenda items I & II: Opening of the meeting and Welcoming statements

Welcoming participants to the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, the Chairman of the Standing Committee (in his capacity as Acting Chairman, pending Agenda item V) declared the meeting open. He pointed out that, owing to the Royal Wedding taking place in Tokyo, the official opening of the Conference would take place on Thursday 10 June.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee stated his belief that this meeting would be a milestone event in the history of the Convention. He noted the growth in the number of

Contracting Parties, since Montreux, to more than 75, the current status of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, which now accounted for some 38 million hectares, and the anticipated attendance of more than 1400 participants at the present meeting. All these statistics emphasized the growing recognition of the importance of wetlands in the maintenance and improvement of environmental conditions around the world. Finally, the Acting Chairman expressed his satisfaction with the documentation prepared for the meeting, and trusted that participants would focus more on wetland conservation action than on structural and organizational issues at this meeting.

Agenda item III: Adoption of the Agenda

At the invitation of the Acting Chairman, the Conference adopted document DOC. C.5.3 (Draft Agenda), together with the associated document DOC. C.5.2 (Annotated Agenda), without debate.

Agenda item IV: Adoption of Rules of Procedure

At the request of the Acting Chairman and referring to document DOC. C.5.3 (Rules of Procedure), the Secretary General noted that the Rules of Procedure had been drafted on the basis of those adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the Contracting Parties at Montreux in 1990. The Standing Committee had subsequently reviewed and finalized document DOC. C.5.3, incorporating a few amendments. The most substantive of these was to alter Rule 10 'Submission of Proposals and Amendments Thereto' in order to extend the period of submission from 30 days to 60 days. In addition, the Secretary General noted the need for another substantive amendment concerning Rule 16 'Official and Working Languages' since he was delighted to announce the addition of Spanish as an official working language. This had been made possible at the present meeting by the generous financial support of Japan and technical assistance from Spain and USA.

The Acting Chairman then invited participants to raise any comments or questions regarding document DOC. C.5.3. There being no intervention from the floor, the Acting Chairman offered document DOC. C.5.3 for adoption, and the Rules of Procedure were duly adopted without debate.

Agenda item V: Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons

The Acting Chairman opened the floor to nominations for the posts of Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen for the meeting.

The delegation of Switzerland proposed the election of a Chairman from the delegation of Japan. The delegation of the Netherlands seconded the proposal. The delegation of Japan signalled its willingness to provide a Chairman and nominated Professor T. Satoo for election to this post.

The delegation of Poland proposed that one of the Vice-Chairman should be elected from the delegation of the USA. The delegation of the UK seconded the proposal.

The delegation of Spain proposed that the second Vice-Chairman should be elected from the delegation of Venezuela. The delegation of Canada seconded the proposal.

The delegations of USA and Venezuela indicated their willingness to stand for election for the posts of Vice-Chairmen.

The Conference, by consensus, elected Japan (represented by Professor T. Satoo) as Chairman of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference and USA (represented by Mr R. Smith) and Venezuela (represented by Mr J. Méndez Arocha) as Vice-Chairmen of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference. Professor Satoo and Mr Méndez Arocha then joined the podium to take up their posts.

Professor Satoo addressed the meeting expressing the honour which he felt in being elected to serve as the presiding officer. He welcomed all Contracting Parties, observer States and non-governmental organizations, noting that the large number of NGO participants reflected wide recognition of the importance of the Convention and the spirit of cooperation required for achieving common wetland conservation goals. He continued by stating his strong belief that the addition of Spanish as a working language was a very important step forward for the Convention. Similarly, with his long experience in the area of natural resource conservation, he was very aware of the importance of the Ramsar Wise Use concept. He hoped that the meeting would generate meaningful outcomes to take forward to the Sixth Meeting of the Conference and asked for participants to observe the necessity for making efficient use of the limited time available in order to ensure the smooth running of the meeting.

Agenda item VI: Appointment of the Credentials and other Committees

Pursuant to Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure, the Chairman invited proposals for appointment to a Credentials Committee consisting of five delegates.

The delegation of Belgium proposed a member of the delegation of Bulgaria for appointment to the Credentials Committee. The delegation of Mexico seconded the proposal.

The delegation of South Africa proposed a member of the delegation of Japan for appointment to the Credentials Committee. The delegation of New Zealand seconded the proposal.

The delegation of Pakistan proposed a member of the delegation of Chile for appointment to the Credentials Committee. The delegation of Hungary seconded the proposal.

The delegation of Peru proposed a member of the delegation of France for appointment to the Credentials Committee. The delegation of Kenya seconded the proposal.

The delegation of India proposed a member of the delegation of Senegal for appointment to the Credentials Committee. The delegation of France seconded the proposal.

The Secretary General suggested that the meeting might like to appoint the representative of UNESCO, the Convention depositary, to act as an observer on the Credentials Committee in order to assist the members with their work.

The Conference, by consensus, appointed a Credentials Committee consisting of members of the delegations of Bulgaria, Chile, France, Japan and Senegal, with UNESCO as an observer.

Agenda item VII: Admission of Observers

At the invitation of the Chairman, and in accordance with Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretary General noted that provision was made for participation in meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties by observers from international agencies or bodies, national governmental agencies and approved non-governmental agencies or bodies, provided the Contracting Parties present did not decide otherwise. He further pointed out that the annex to document DOC. C.5.10 listed bodies and agencies which had informed the Bureau of their desire to be represented at the meeting by observers. Recalling the valuable technical assistance provided to the Convention by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Secretary General was pleased to welcome a record number of NGOs to this meeting, which clearly demonstrated growing interest in the Convention. However, the meeting would be required to make a formal decision on the admittance of these observers. In the case of national NGOs, the body concerned could only be admitted following provision of written approval from the country in which it was located. Such approval had been received from all those organizations listed in the annex to document DOC. C.5.10 as having registered, together with a small number of NGOs which had registered since production of the annex (a list of which was read out to the meeting), and the Secretary General therefore commended admission of these observers.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the meeting agreed by consensus to admit all of the observers who had so far registered. These observers were welcomed to the meeting, and the Chairman noted that the Agenda item would have to be revisited as more registrations were received.

Agenda item VIII: Presentation of Report of the Standing Committee

The Chairman invited the delegation of the USA, Chairman of the Standing Committee, to present a brief report highlighting the major activities of the present Standing Committee since its election at the Fourth Meeting of the Conference (Montreux, Switzerland, 1990).

Referring to document DOC. C.5.4, the Chairman of the Standing Committee noted that the Standing Committee had been active in the implementation of the Convention's policy, programmatic, budgetary and personnel matters. He also recalled the role of the Committee in establishing operational guidelines for the Wetland Conservation Fund and in making initial allocations from the Fund. He briefly referred to each of the occasions on which the Standing Committee had met during the triennium, thanking the Governments of Japan, Switzerland, UK and USA for generously hosting the Standing Committee. He highlighted a meeting held in January 1993 between IUCN and a small sub-group of the Standing Committee (with representatives of the Netherlands, Switzerland, UK and USA). This meeting had been arranged at the request of the Standing Committee in order to review relations between IUCN and the Ramsar Bureau, particularly with respect to financial and administrative matters. The meeting had concluded with full understanding reached with the Director General of IUCN. In order to clarify administrative arrangements, the Director General had decided to delegate primary responsibility for personnel, finance and office maintenance to the Secretary General; an instrument to this effect had been signed by the Director General of IUCN and endorsed by the Chairman of the Standing Committee.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee expressed his appreciation of the continuing support of IUCN and IWRB, and for the excellent work undertaken by the Bureau staff. He also thanked the representatives of Africa, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland and Tunisia who would

be retiring from the Standing Committee after the present meeting. Finally, he thanked Mr T. Wanibuchi, Mayor of the City of Kushiro, for the magnificent facilities which had been provided for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

The Chairman invited comments or questions concerning the Standing Committee's report. There being no interventions forthcoming from the floor, the Chairman thanked the Standing Committee Chairman for his report and closed the Agenda item.

Agenda item IX: Presentation of Report of the Convention Bureau

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary General took the floor. On behalf of the Convention Bureau, he welcomed all delegates and observers to the meeting. He conveyed his deepest thanks to the Japanese authorities - the Central Government, the Prefectural Government of Hokkaido, and the local authorities of Kushiro City and neighbouring towns - for the excellent arrangements made for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference.

He noted that 9 June was traditionally an auspicious day in the Japanese calendar, and this was especially true today in view of the Royal Wedding and the opening of the Kushiro Conference, the largest and most important meeting ever held under the auspices of the Ramsar Convention.

He reminded the Conference of the fundamental reason for the meeting: the promotion of the conservation and wise use of wetlands throughout the world. He noted that the Ramsar Convention was working to stem the loss of wetlands, and to reverse the trend of wetland destruction to one of global conservation of wetlands. There would be important opportunities during the present meeting to compare wetland conservation activities in different parts of the world, and to determine priorities for future action.

The Secretary General continued by presenting highlights of document DOC. C.5.5 (Report of the Convention Bureau), covering developments under the Convention over the past triennium. The Convention had grown rapidly over the past three years, now having 77 Contracting Parties and some 610 Ramsar sites; almost a 50% increase in membership and more than a 20% increase in the number of listed sites. A major focus of the present meeting must be to promote growth in Convention membership. Ramsar had moved towards a more balanced membership and was now a truly global treaty; for instance there had been a major increase in the number of Neotropical Contracting Parties. However, there remained a major imbalance in the representation of listed sites from the various regions.

The four main work areas of the Bureau were:

- assisting the Contracting Parties (e.g. maintenance of the List and application of the listed sites database; development of the Wise Use guidelines, operation of the Wetland Conservation Fund);
- promoting international cooperation (e.g. twinned sites and shared wetlands; development assistance; international coordination; and regional meetings);
- fostering communication (e.g. promotion and publicity of wetland conservation values through publications, audio-visual materials; use of Ramsar logo in promotional items; development of information resources and photographic library); and

- administering the Convention (e.g. communication with Contracting Parties; management of staff; day-to-day management of Convention finances).

The Secretary General noted that the Bureau worked in closest cooperation with partner organizations, notably IUCN, IWRB, WWF and Birdlife International in its efforts to implement its programme of work.

The Secretary General noted his concern that the salaries of only six out of the present Bureau staff of 14 were currently covered by the core budget; this was especially significant in the light of a rapidly expanding workload occasioned by the growth of the Convention. Nevertheless, the triennium had seen a steady growth in Convention resources, especially project support, to enable the Bureau to carry out its work efficiently. Annual contributions to the core budget had been supplemented by additional financial support from numerous Contracting Parties and organizations, listed in the triennial report.

In conclusion, the Secretary General noted his pride in the Bureau staff and conveyed his thanks to them for their untiring efforts over the past triennium. A good team had been assembled at the Convention Bureau; they had moved into new headquarters with IUCN in August 1992, thanks to the generosity of the Swiss authorities, and had been able to accomplish much for wetland conservation. He noted that the 'spirit of Ramsar' - a sense of cooperation - had been the guiding light for delegates at previous conferences and that with this spirit, the Conference could look forward to the challenges of the next three years.

Kushiro Marsh Presentation

The Chairman invited Mr. T. Wanibuchi, Mayor of the City of Kushiro, to make a presentation on Kushiro Marsh.

Mayor Wanibuchi expressed his thanks to the Chairman for providing this opportunity to make a presentation on the opening day of the meeting. He also expressed his pleasure that participants had come from all over the world to attend this Conference in Kushiro City. He extended his thanks to the Japanese Central Government, to the Prefectural Government of Hokkaido and to the local authorities in Kushiro City and other towns in the region. He recalled that 9 June was an auspicious day, referring to the Royal Wedding and the first day of this, the largest ever meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention.

Through his presentation, he wished to introduce participants to Kushiro Marsh. Kushiro Marsh was a Wetland of International Importance adjacent to Kushiro City. It was rich in wildlife, including migratory waterbirds and endangered species such as Japanese Crane *Grus japonensis*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Steller's Sea Eagle *H. pelagicus* and Blakiston's Fish Owl *Ketupa blakistoni*. Human association with Kushiro Marsh dated back to prehistoric times, when people had lived off its fish and shellfish resources. Climatic cooling some 2,000 to 3,000 years ago had led to a lowering in sea level which had resulted in the formation of the marsh. The indigenous inhabitants of the area, the Ainu, lived traditionally in harmony with nature.

The exploitation of land for agriculture had led to attempts to drain the marsh, but drainage had proved difficult. In the early twentieth century, Kushiro had been hit by major floods, and the

city had been inundated due to its location downstream of Kushiro Marsh. This had prompted the city to instigate a major river regulation project using the marsh as an integral part of the system.

In the 1970s, when global awareness of environmental issues had been rising, Kushiro Marsh had been regarded as a wasteland. The late Professor Tanaka had been aware of the values of the marsh and had initiated a comprehensive programme for its conservation and wise use. A symposium had been organized which resulted in a task force to preserve the marsh, which had been designated as Japan's first Ramsar site in 1980. A Liaison Council had been established leading to full-scale activities towards the conservation and wise use of the marsh, and in 1987, Kushiro Marsh had been designated as a National Park.

Mayor Wanibuchi then presented a video film entitled 'Listen to the Whisper of Nature Message from Kushiro Marsh' which portrayed the habitats and wildlife of the wetland.

Mayor Wanibuchi drew the attention of participants to other wetlands in Hokkaido, such as Kiritappu Marsh. He expressed his desire to collect more information and to conduct research into the conservation and wise use of wetlands of international importance. He stated his interest in cooperating with other groups concerned with raising awareness of wetlands elsewhere in Asia, as well as in Japan, in particular through the networks of IWRB and AWB. Finally, Mayor Wanibuchi expressed his thanks to the Chairman, and expressed his wish that the present meeting should contribute to wetland conservation at both global and local levels. He wished all participants a pleasant stay in Kushiro.

The Chairman thanked Mayor Wanibuchi for his presentation, and, following a few administrative announcements, closed the session at 1250.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Second Session: 9 June 1993, 1400 - 1730

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr R. Smith (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Mr R.C. Prentice, Ms C.M. Samuel

Agenda item X: Review of Implementation of the Convention

Taking the chair at the invitation of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman from Venezuela invited the Assistant Secretary General to introduce document DOC. C.5.16 'Review of national reports and of implementation of the Convention since the Fourth Meeting of the Conference in Montreux'. This had been compiled using information submitted to the Bureau and the national reports. A small number of reports had been received within the deadline for submission, namely six months before the Conference, and 38 by late April, the time when the report was compiled. Since then more reports had been submitted and information on these would be incorporated into a definitive report to be produced after the Conference.

The Assistant Secretary then went on to summarize the latest status of the Convention. 77 states

in comparison with 54 at the time of the Montreux Conference had deposited their instruments of accession with UNESCO (this figure included the recent deposit by Brazil). It was understood that other states were on the verge of joining the Convention. Nearly all Contracting Parties had now accepted the Paris Protocol whereas 16 of the required 21 Contracting Parties had accepted the Regina amendments.

The competent administrative authorities nominated by Contracting Parties were listed in document INF. C.5.5 and the Assistant Secretary General urged the Parties to check that the entry for their country was correct and to advise the Secretariat of any errors.

Many Parties had established national committees and a draft recommendation calling for more to be established was to be presented to the present meeting.

Following the recommendation at the Montreux Conference, a significant amount of data on Ramsar sites had been submitted to the Bureau, using the approved datasheets and wetland classification, and incorporated into the Ramsar database at IWRB, Slimbridge. (A presentation on the database would be given in Workshop A).

The List of Wetlands of International Importance now stood at 610 sites, covering nearly 38 million hectares, whereas at the opening of the Montreux Conference in 1990 there had been 497 sites. Whereas between Regina and Montreux, the increase in listed sites had come mainly from additional sites listed by existing parties, the increase since Montreux had rather come from new Parties. Finally the Assistant Secretary General emphasized the importance of the Wetland Conservation Fund and of the special projects supported by Contracting Parties (notably France, Netherlands and USA).

The Assistant Secretary General then turned to the two principal wetland issues, listed sites and national wetland policies. Firstly he reviewed matters concerning the maintenance of ecological character of wetland sites. No deletions of sites from the List had been recorded. Draft recommendation REC. 5.2 referred to the possibility that, as in the case of Pakistan, it might be appropriate to remove sites from the List if they did not meet the criteria. Few boundary restrictions had been recorded.

Draft recommendation REC. 5.1 would refer to possible changes of ecological character at individual sites. Draft recommendation REC. 5.4 would attempt to set guidelines on how to maintain the ecological character of a site. The establishment of a Scientific and Technical Committee to oversee application of existing guidelines and to develop new ones might be an appropriate new measure.

Two mechanisms of great importance in helping the Contracting Parties to maintain the ecological character of listed sites were the Monitoring Procedure and the Montreux Record; the latter identified sites requiring priority attention and possible application of the Monitoring Procedure. Draft recommendation REC. 5.3 suggested a procedure for adding or deleting sites to/from the Record. The Assistant Secretary General invited the Conference to reflect on the indication that a large number of Ramsar sites, probably more than 10% of those listed, were likely to suffer change in ecological character. Document DOC. C.5.16 reviewed the application of the Monitoring Procedure over the triennium. Workshop A would stress the need to give greater attention to the execution of the recommendations of monitoring missions.

A review of actions at listed sites included reference to wetland management, a subject scarcely covered by the Convention to date. Draft recommendation REC. 5.8 called for the adoption of management plans for all Ramsar sites, and proposed a methodology for drawing them up.

The guidelines on wise use approved at Montreux recommended the development of national wetland policies. Only two Contracting Parties, Canada and Uganda, had so far stated that they had established national wetland policies. A number of countries had embarked upon the difficult process towards establishment of a policy and several others had expressed interest in developing such policies. Workshop B would further consider wetland policies. Progress on the development of national wetland inventories, an essential element of national wetland policies, was reviewed, emphasizing the complex and costly nature of this task. There was a need to provide guidelines on how to produce inventories, and to provide support for such work.

In conclusion the Assistant Secretary General referred to several general points raised in the national reports, relating to the Convention's implementation. He emphasized the need for more publicity about the Convention; the need for national legislation to apply the provisions of the Convention; and the need for involvement of NGOs. He noted the increasing international consultations over several transboundary wetlands and drew attention to the need for international consultation over development assistance affecting wetland conservation. Workshop D would review the financial implications of development at both multilateral and bilateral levels. One final important consideration was for Ramsar to react to the UNCED conference in Rio, the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21. The draft Kushiro Statement provided a basic statement of Ramsar's response. It would be the Contracting Parties' responsibility to see that the Statement was appropriately phrased and actively implemented.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Assistant Secretary General for his presentation and for the considerable work which preparation of the document had involved. He then called for the presentations from the regional representatives on the Standing Committee.

Africa

The delegation of Tunisia noted that the number of Contracting Parties in Africa had increased to 18 and African listed sites now covered an area of 4 million hectares. In its capacity as regional representative the delegation of Tunisia had been active in disseminating information on Ramsar at various international and regional meetings, notably the Regional Meeting held in preparation for the present Conference in Senegal in March 1993 which had highlighted the need for improved coordination within the whole region. The Ramsar Convention evidently had a great role to play in Africa. The report of the Senegal meeting indicated areas for improvement e.g the provision of technical assistance, support for conservation matters, and the appointment of an African Regional Officer in the Ramsar Bureau.

The delegation of Kenya, the Alternate Regional Representative, then spoke of activities in East, Central and Southern Africa. He reported on the organization of several regional meetings and national wetland workshops. Consultations had been held between South Africa and Namibia on management of the Orange River and between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania on Lake Victoria and Lake Natron. The Monitoring Procedure had been carried out at St Lucia, South Africa. Further assistance was needed to set up regional meetings, research, inventory and management activities. He endorsed the appointment of an African Technical Officer in the Bureau, this region being one of the few not yet covered by such an appointment.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the delegations of Tunisia and Kenya for their presentations.

Asia

The Vice-Chairman invited Pakistan to speak on behalf of Asia. The delegation of Pakistan, regional representative for Asia, reported that Contracting Parties in the region now numbered 13. Several important regional meetings had been held to promote cooperation among the member countries and NGOs concerned with wetland conservation. The meeting in Karachi had resulted in the linkage between the Asian Wetland Bureau and IWRB and in achieving transboundary cooperation between India and Bangladesh concerning the Sundarbans. The Monitoring Procedure, whose purpose was to identify problems, remove irritants and promote wise use, had been carried out in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The regional representative for Asia then highlighted the most significant activities carried out by each of the Asian Parties. For Bangladesh, Indonesia and China, who had recently joined the Convention it was too early to report on activities carried out under the Convention.

Eastern Europe

The delegation of Poland, regional representative for Eastern Europe, reported on the situation in the region. Major political and economic changes had occurred in the region since the meeting of the Contracting Parties in Montreux, with a general shift to market based economies and the privatization of land. Profound changes in legal systems had occurred, and ecological movements were developing. Several new independent states had emerged, some of which had already joined the Convention. The region contained rich wetland resources of international importance which were in need of protection and wise use.

There were currently ten Contracting Parties in the region, and there was interest in joining from the newly independent Baltic states and Ukraine. The Contracting Parties had listed 45 wetlands under the Convention, with a total area of over 2.2 million hectares, and there were plans to add more wetlands to the List. The Monitoring Procedure had been applied at Srebarna in Bulgaria and Siedem Wysp in Poland.

The Pan-European regional Ramsar meeting at Lelystad in September 1992 had contributed greatly to better international cooperation in the implementation of the Convention, to more efficient exchange of information, and to the improvement of understanding of the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Poland wished to express its gratitude to the Dutch Government for organizing the meeting.

Over the triennium, there had been considerable activity by international organizations in the region, and in particular by IUCN, WWF and IWRB who had raised funds for projects. IUCN had also opened permanent national offices in some East European countries.

Poland was pleased to acknowledge the efforts of the Convention Bureau which had applied for financial support for projects in the region, and had stimulated the establishment of several new projects. Finally, Poland expressed its deepest gratitude for the warm hospitality with which participants had been received in Japan.

Neotropical Region

The delegation of Venezuela, the regional representative for the Neotropical region, recalled that Venezuela had been elected at the Fourth Meeting of the Conference, held in Montreux in 1990, and that Uruguay had been elected as Alternate Representative.

The Contracting Parties within the region were currently Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil (which had just joined the Convention), Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. Paraguay had signed the convention, subject to ratification.

During the triennium, Venezuela had tried to ensure that all Contracting Parties in the region received regular information concerning activities under the Convention and that all countries were aware of the value of the Convention.

In August 1992, Venezuela had hosted in Caracas the First Regional Meeting for Neotropical Contracting Parties. In January 1993, the technical meeting for Ramsar site managers had been held in Bolivia, while in April 1993, the French Government had hosted a meeting for countries in the Caribbean part of the Region.

The delegation of Venezuela stressed the need for ever-closer regional coordination, but noted that this might become more difficult as more Caribbean island nations joined the Convention. He concluded by referring to the opportunities for international cooperation provided by the Wetland Conservation Fund but called for increased coordination among the many international agencies and bodies active in wetland conservation.

North America

The delegation of Canada reported on behalf of the three North American Contracting Parties, Canada, Mexico and USA. He stressed that the North American Region covered 16% of the world and contained about 185 million hectares of wetlands. 43 Ramsar sites had been designated, covering 14.2 million hectares, or 8% of the region's wetland resource. Four sites in the USA had been added to the List since the Montreux Meeting.

A broad range of national and international policy initiatives aimed at strengthening wetland conservation in the region had been developed during the triennium. Thus, in March 1992, Canada had launched a Federal Wetland Policy, with far-reaching effects on numerous agencies and bodies. In the USA, restoration of degraded wetlands had been an important priority; the US Fish and Wildlife Service had assisted the restoration of some 88,000 hectares between 1990 and 1993.

Regional cooperation had benefited from further development of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), first established in 1988. Mexico had recently announced its intention of becoming a full NAWMP partner in the near future. Canada and the USA were cooperating to promote conservation of wetlands within the Great Lakes Basin, two thirds of the natural shorelines of the Great Lakes having been lost to development in former years.

Regional initiatives in the field of wetland research were highlighted, for example, in Mexico SEDASOL was developing a network of wetland research institutes, while in the USA the Institute for Waterfowl and Wetland Research had been established by Ducks Unlimited.

Considerable attention had been paid to raising public awareness of wetland conservation priorities; amongst materials relating specifically to the Ramsar Convention was a publication produced by the Canadian Wildlife Service entitled 'Wetlands for the World - Canada's Ramsar sites'. Mexico had

produced a detailed map of its wetlands, while in the USA an NGO-National Ramsar Committee had been formed.

Finally, turning to the future, the delegation of Canada highlighted the tremendous opportunities which current and ongoing changes in agricultural policies offered towards strengthening wetland conservation.

Western Europe

This report was presented by the Netherlands, regional representative for Western Europe.

The Ramsar Convention had always had strong links with Western Europe and these had been further strengthened since Montreux. However, the ecological condition of wetlands in the region remained a matter of great concern. Relatively few wetlands remained in an intact or near-intact condition and even these were generally under threat, especially from drainage, acidification, fragmentation, negative external influences and insufficient management. Overall wetland policies were required for each country and considerable progress had been made recently towards this goal.

During the triennium bonds between Eastern and Western Europe had been strengthened considerably, notably at the Regional Meeting convened jointly by the Netherlands and Poland and hosted by the Dutch Government at Lelystad in September 1992. This meeting had resulted in a very positive Declaration; amongst the key conclusions had been:

- the Montreux Record was a helpful tool, but sites should only be added to or removed from the Record with the approval of the Contracting Party concerned;
- in view of the ongoing changes in Eastern Europe the current two European Regions should be retained;
- Spanish should be an official working language of the Convention;
- a draft recommendation on the positive role of NGOs in wetland conservation should be prepared and submitted to the Kushiro Conference.

Amongst major regional initiatives had been the establishment of MedWet, a cooperative programme for Mediterranean wetland conservation, funded by the European Community (EC) with the participation of five EC member states (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain), the Ramsar Bureau, IWRB and WWF. The member states of the European Community had also adopted a Directive concerning habitat conservation (usually referred to as the Habitats Directive), while a Western Palearctic Waterfowl Agreement had been drafted in the framework of the Bonn Convention.

The triennium had also seen an increased integration of wetland conservation with other areas of Government policy, in particular, at the EC level, within the context of the Community's Common Agricultural Policy and Structural Development Funds.

Amongst future changes would be the further elaboration of European cooperation; the elaboration of a European Strategy for the conservation of

biodiversity; the increased application of the Wise Use concept in Europe; closer cooperation with NGOs, and the continuing integration of wetland conservation with other policy areas.

Oceania

As regional representative, the delegation of Australia began by welcoming Papua New Guinea as a new Contracting Party to the region. He noted that Vanuatu was present as an observer and hoped that this was indicative of a growing interest in the Convention among countries in Oceania.

To date 46 listed sites, covering 5.1 million hectares, had been designated and Australia would soon be listing two additional sites in Queensland, namely Bowling Green Bay near Townsville and Moreton Bay near Brisbane.

In addition to contributing to the core budget of the Convention, both New Zealand and Australia had supported the Wetland Conservation Fund, through direct support to activities financed by the Fund.

In Australia, several sites had experienced or were experiencing ecological change of some degree. However, in each case, the relevant State Government Agency was investigating appropriate steps to improve the situation.

Under New Zealand's Wetland Management Policy, adopted in 1986, an inventory of Wetlands of Ecological Representative Importance had been established and used in compiling the New Zealand section of the newly completed Directory of Oceanian Wetlands.

Australia was currently developing a Wetland Managers' Manual and had also recently established a programme called the National Reserve System, set up to place under conservation management a representative sample of Australia's ecosystems, including wetlands. A similar programme already existed in New Zealand.

Referring once more to the Directory of Oceanian Wetlands, the representative from Australia noted that the Australian section of that inventory had been prepared on the basis of the Ramsar wetland classification system. However, one apparent omission from that system had been detected, notably subterranean karst systems; although an uncommon wetland type, this should be added to the Ramsar system.

Both Australia and New Zealand were active members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme through which a regional marine turtles conservation programme was underway. With respect to migratory birds, Australia was actively supporting the proposed multilateral agreement, under the Bonn Convention, for the conservation of birds using the East and West Asian Flyways.

Finally, the Australian Government had supported an environmental theatre production entitled 'Waderbirds - Odyssey of Wetlands' which combined science, conservation and art by focusing on the annual migration along the East Asian flyway. A performance of the production would take place in Kushiro, on Monday 14 June at 1830 and all participants were urged to attend.

The Chairman thanked the delegation of Australia for its report and asked Mr D. Wells, observer from the AWB (Asian Wetland Bureau) - IWRB (International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau) - WA (Wetlands for the Americas) partnership to make a brief presentation concerning the new Directory of Oceanian Wetlands. Mr Wells noted that the Directory had been published as a companion volume to the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia, and covered some 182 sites. It was envisaged that this work would be updated on a regular basis in the future and it was hoped that the Directories would serve to generate national wetland conservation action within the Region. AWB was currently engaged in establishing a regional training course to be held in Papua New Guinea and aimed to develop a permanent regional programme to help support and facilitate wise use policies throughout Oceania. Mr Wells then presented copies of the Oceanian and Australian directories to the Chairman who expressed his appreciation on behalf of the meeting.

The Chairman then opened the floor to discussion. The representative of the delegation of Indonesia reported that since his government had ratified the Convention, several important activities had been carried out with assistance from the UK Overseas Development Administration and AWB. These included an improvement to the conservation status of Berbak Game Reserve which had been upgraded to a National Park; establishment of a database; and cooperative work at Berbak with the Ministry of Public Works.

The delegation of Brazil stated that his country was pleased to join the Convention under the new spirit of international cooperation forged at the Rio Conference. He noted that the Ramsar Convention was an instrument to promote conservation and to ensure the exercise of the right to development by the peoples that benefited directly from wetlands. It was in this context that Brazil took note of the efforts to progress that Ramsar Convention, bringing it into line with fundamental concepts agreed unanimously and at the highest political level at UNCED, or accepted in legally binding instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. As a result of the Rio decisions, sustainable development presupposed the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and the availability of new and additional financial resources to developing countries. Ramsar projects had also to take into account the social dimension involved, since 80% of the world population depended upon water resources. Therefore, conservation of wetlands should aim at ensuring the sustainable use of these areas by their inhabitants and such use should promote conservation. This was one of the challenges facing everyone recognizing the growing importance of wetlands for maintaining ecological balance and as life supporting systems.

The delegation of Panama was pleased to make a formal announcement of the designation of a second Panamanian site for the Ramsar List.

The delegation of China noted that this was the first time China had attended a Meeting of the Conference as a Contracting Party; although it was too early to report in detail on Chinese activities under the Convention a few brief comments could be made. China's vast size and diversity gave rise to many different kinds of wetlands. Considerable efforts had been made to

promote wetland conservation; some 73 wetland reserves had been established and bilateral migratory bird protection agreements had been concluded with Japan and Australia. China had designated 6 Ramsar sites and was preparing to host a national wetland conservation workshop to be held in cooperation with WWF and AWB. Production of a national wetland conservation action plan was also envisaged. China had been allocated assistance from the Wetland Conservation Fund for the preparation of management plans for two of its listed sites; it was hoped that these plans could serve as a model for other wetlands in the country. Finally, China wished to strengthen its participation in the Convention in the future.

The delegation of Romania expressed its thanks to Japan for the generous and warm welcome extended to participants. Detailed information concerning Romania's listed site, the Danube Delta, would be provided at a later time during the Meeting. Since Romania had become a Contracting Party the Conservation Department of the Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with representatives of the Academy of Sciences, had initiated a wetland inventory which now contained data covering 27 wetlands. Romania intended to set up a national Ramsar network and wanted to establish detailed studies aimed at identifying candidate sites for future Ramsar designation.

The delegation of Mauritania thanked Japan and the Ramsar Bureau for the excellent preparations made for the present Meeting. Mauritania had been pleased to note the existence of further scope for north-south cooperation under the Convention. There was a need to strengthen cooperation between financial institutions and countries with major wetlands; for example, the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania was one of the least disturbed of any listed sites. He expressed the hope that the Diawling National Park would soon be designated for the Ramsar List.

The delegation of Costa Rica announced the designation of a new Ramsar site on the Pacific coast, making a total of three listed sites in the country. Preparations were under way for establishing a network of Pacific coast wetlands within the national legal framework. Thanks to the support of IUCN a national wetland conservation plan had been established. There was a need to increase efforts for management of Central American wetlands, especially in the case of shared wetland systems.

The Vice-Chairman drew discussion to a close, but noted that this Agenda item would be reopened the next day. Following a request from the Secretary General that Contracting Parties designating new sites should convey the appropriate documentation to the Secretariat as soon as possible, the Vice-Chairman declared the Session closed.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Third Session: 10 June 1993, 0845 - 1200

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr R. Smith (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Dr M. Herzig Zürcher, Ms C.M. Samuel

Agenda items I & II (cont.): Opening of the meeting and Welcoming statements

The formal opening of the meeting (see Annex 1) was preceded by a performance of traditional Japanese music, played on the koto, a traditional stringed instrument.

The Chairman formally opened the meeting by introducing representatives of the Prefectural Government of Hokkaido and the City of Kushiro.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Koji Kakizawa, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcomed participants on behalf of the Japanese Government. He expressed his appreciation to the people of Kushiro for their efforts in organizing this Conference. Following on from the Rio Conference, he noted his Government's commitment to intensifying efforts for international cooperation on environmental conservation and development issues. He noted the importance of the Ramsar Convention as a tool for international cooperation on wetland conservation and wise use and underlined the importance of the Kushiro Conference as the first Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to be held in the Asian Region. In acknowledgement of Japan's concern for wetland conservation and desire to support efforts for the development of new approaches towards balancing conservation and wise use of wetlands in southeast Asia and strengthening international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention, the Japanese Government was pleased to inform the meeting of a 1993 contribution of 10 million yen to the Wetland Conservation Fund.

The Chairman introduced Mr Taikan Hayashi, Minister of the Environment Agency, who welcomed participants and noted Japan's duty to participate actively in global wetland conservation for the benefit of all humanity. Mr Hayashi was delighted to inform the Conference of the designation of five new Listed sites in Japan; he considered these designations to be a significant step in the implementation of the Convention in Japan and a means of responding to the desire of Japanese people for sustainable use of wetlands and the active promotion of environmental conservation.

The Chairman noted with appreciation the designations announced by Japan and introduced Mr Takahiro Yokomichi, Governor of Hokkaido, who extended a welcome on behalf of the 5.7 million citizens of Hokkaido, including the inhabitants of Kushiro. Mr Yokomichi recalled the significance of the natural environment in Hokkaido, and mentioned the special efforts undertaken by the Prefecture which aimed at promoting the conservation and recovery of the natural environment into the next century. With the implementation of these plans, Hokkaido wished to play a leading role in the application of the wise use concept and the conservation of wetlands. Finally, Mr Yokomichi expressed his pleasure that two of Japan's new Ramsar sites were located in Hokkaido. He hoped that this meeting of the Conference would contribute significantly to global wetland conservation and warmly invited delegates to participate in the excursions to the wetlands of Hokkaido.

The Chairman introduced Mr Toshiyuki Wanibuchi, Mayor of Kushiro City, who described to participants some of the events that had been involved in the preparation of the Conference. He expressed his gratitude for the high degree of interest and commitment demonstrated by the citizens of Kushiro and neighbouring communities during the five years that had preceded the Conference. Mayor Wanibuchi also extended appreciation for the messages of encouragement received from all over the world following the January earthquake that had affected the city of Kushiro. As the world faced increasingly serious environmental challenges, Mayor Wanibuchi

hoped that the Conference would discuss ways of restoring the beauty of the Earth by thinking globally and acting locally in favour of wetland conservation and wise use, and pledged his support for implementing the resolutions and recommendations of the Conference and to work even harder in promoting the conservation and wise use of Kushiro marsh. As a symbol of this commitment and as a permanent reminder of the venue of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Mayor Wanibuchi announced the dedication of the Conference building as the new Ramsar Memorial Center.

The participants warmly applauded Mr Wanibuchi's announcement. The Chairman then introduced Mr Tadahiko Nishikido, Director General of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, who presented the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention with a framed edition of a set of stamps featuring Japanese Cranes, created to commemorate the Kushiro Conference. The Secretary General gratefully acknowledged the beautiful gift, which would be proudly displayed at the Bureau's offices in Gland, Switzerland.

On behalf of the Chairman of the Ramsar Standing Committee, the Secretary General presented Ramsar diplomas to the representatives of Hamanaka Town, Akkeshi Town, Narashino City, Kaga City, and Shiga Prefecture, the location of Japan's new Ramsar sites. Following this presentation, Mr Minoru Inaba, Governor of Shiga Prefecture, addressed the meeting on behalf of his colleagues. He expressed his gratitude to the Ramsar Bureau and the Government of Japan for the efforts made to bring about the protection of wetlands. All the newly designated sites represented valuable wetlands, of which the largest was Lake Biwa, covering 65,602 ha. There was a strong desire to revitalize the traditionally harmonious coexistence of local communities with the lake. The Prefecture of Shiga had made considerable efforts over the last two decades in the area of environmental protection through legislation, research, training, information exchange and international cooperation. Mr Inaba concluded his address by extending his best wishes to all participants for a very successful meeting.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary General welcomed a new video on wise use presented to him by Mr Takuya Okada, President of the Aeon Environment Foundation and Mr Tetsuo Abe, of NHK Hokkaido Vision. In return, the Secretary General presented certificates of appreciation to both companies. The new video was then screened and received warmly by the Conference.

The Chairman invited welcoming statements from UNESCO, UNEP, IUCN and IWRB. Mr Daniel de San, representing UNESCO, greeted participants, extending salutations from the Director General of UNESCO and reiterating the commitment of UNESCO to nature conservation, as exemplified by the existence of the MAB Programme's network of Biosphere Reserves and the work of the World Heritage Convention. These protected areas together with the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance were all complementary instruments for international conservation cooperation. The existence of 77 Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention was evidence of the importance attached by governments to wetlands. Mr de San noted that the Regina Amendments would enter into force after 4 more Contracting Parties had accepted them; that moment would constitute an important step in the history of the Convention (see Annex 2).

The Chairman thanked Mr de San for his interesting contribution and asked him to convey the good wishes of the Conference to the Director General of UNESCO.

The Chairman then presented Mr Reuben Olemba, representing UNEP, who conveyed the greetings of Ms Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the new Executive Director of UNEP. Ms Dowdeswell had been delighted by the leadership role that the Government of Japan had shown on various environmental issues, from hosting last year's CITES Conference to this year's Whaling Commission meeting and Ramsar Conference; these were all manifestations of the renewed role Japan had been taking since the Rio Conference. Greetings were conveyed to the Government of Shiga Prefecture which would host the new UNEP International Centre for Technology Transfer at Lake Biwa (see Annex 3).

At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Martin Holdgate, Director General of the World Conservation Union, recalled the special relationship of IUCN with the Ramsar Convention. He strongly affirmed the commitment of IUCN to giving full support to the Ramsar Convention. Dr Holdgate noted the relevance of many of IUCN's technical activities to the Convention and that, as a result of this Conference, some common strategies could be developed to make a reality of the wetland sections of Agenda 21 and Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living (see Annex 4).

The Chairman invited Dr Michael Moser, Director of IWRB, to address the Conference. Dr Moser stated that IWRB had been associated with the Ramsar Convention from its beginnings, more than 30 years ago and that the continuous growth of the Convention gave grounds for optimism. However, much work was still needed to understand and practise the meaning of wise use, to strengthen wetland restoration programmes and to build public awareness concerning the value of wetlands. New partnerships needed to be built to enhance efforts at international, national and local levels and to increase the participation of other sectors such as agriculture, tourism and industry. Dr Moser expressed his hopes that other member states would follow Japan's lead in supporting the Wetland Conservation Fund and pledged the support of IWRB and its partner organizations (AWB and WA) to enhancing technical support to the Ramsar Bureau and to the Contracting Parties. Dr Moser concluded by saluting the Government and people of Japan for hosting the Conference (see Annex 5).

Welcoming statements were also received from BirdLife International (see Annex 6) and from the Bonn Convention Secretariat - UNEP/CMS (see Annex 7).

Agenda item X (cont.): Review of Implementation of the Convention

Discussion of agenda item X, carried over from the second plenary session, continued with the Vice-Chairman from Venezuela resuming the chair. It commenced with the Vice-Chairman inviting comments concerning document DOC. C.5.16 ('Review of national reports and of implementation of the Convention'), with particular reference to any points which had emerged during the previous evening's regional consultations. Owing to the large number of delegates wishing to speak, the Vice-Chairman asked that interventions be kept as short as possible.

The delegation of Iceland announced that the country would shortly be depositing with UNESCO an instrument of acceptance of the Regina amendments. In addition he noted that, since submission of Iceland's national report before the deadline six months earlier, the legal status of its two Listed sites had altered, leading to further strengthening of their conservation situation. Steps had been taken by the Icelandic government to ensure the protection and wise use of both Thjórsárver and Lake Myvatn. At the latter site, a bill had been introduced to the national legislative assembly confining sediment dredging for diatomite, in the spirit of the

Precautionary Principle, to a restricted area of the lake's northern basin. Dredging would cease by the year 2010. Recent changes in legislation meant that the proposed hydro-electric power station development at Thjórsárver would have to be subject to a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment. No application for development had been submitted. It was requested that the final version of document DOC. C.5.16 should reflect these changes and that both sites be removed from the Montreux Record.

The delegation of Bangladesh provided information on developments following the country's accession to the Convention in 1992. Since the designation of Bangladesh's first Ramsar site, the Sundarbans, where a major conservation project was being funded by The World Bank, two further sites had been identified, surveys carried out and maps prepared. At the initiative of IUCN and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a workshop on the conservation of freshwater wetlands in Bangladesh had been held in December 1992. A major recommendation of this workshop had been to initiate the formulation of a national wetland policy. Other recommendations had dealt with site specific planning approaches; participation of the local population and NGOs in the planning process; the designation of wetland protected areas; and the preparation of a national wetland inventory.

The delegation of the Czech Republic announced that, since joining the Convention, a new national landscape protection law, which included wetlands, had been passed in June 1992. A national inventory of wetlands had also been completed and the resulting publication, covering about 1,000 sites, was available upon request. Five new Ramsar sites were being designated and upon receipt of an invoice, the Czech Republic would pay its 1993 contribution to the Convention budget in the near future.

The delegation of India referred to a state-wide wetland mapping programme being carried out by the national remote sensing agency. He also reported on recent conservation measures at three of India's Ramsar sites, notably Keoladeo National Park, Chilka Lake and Loktak Lake. All of these sites faced pressures and the initiatives described had been carried out to curtail further degradation. Finally, India took great pleasure in presenting calendars on the wetlands of east Calcutta, created in honour of a landmark public interest litigation preventing further encroachment on these natural wetlands, together with a publication on mangroves, to officials presiding at the plenary session.

The delegation of Canada wished to reiterate the welcoming statement of the Director of IWRB in congratulating the Ramsar Convention upon its successes, whilst emphasizing the considerable work still to be done in the field of wetland conservation. The designation of Canada's 31st Ramsar site, Tabusintac Lake and Estuary, was formally announced, bringing the total area of Listed sites in Canada to more than 13 million hectares. Several additional designations could be expected in the future.

The delegation of Ghana formally noted with gratitude the receipt of US\$ 7.2 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to facilitate survey, designation, scientific inventory and monitoring activities at five new coastal Ramsar sites. He acknowledged the helpful role of the Bureau in this acquisition. Ghana also wished to formally acknowledge the assistance of BirdLife International in funding an initial bird survey of these wetlands.

On behalf of Côte d'Ivoire the delegation of Senegal announced that Côte d'Ivoire was in the process of becoming a Contracting Party and the designation of two very important wetland

sites was envisaged.

The delegation of Uganda conveyed greetings from the Ugandan Head of State, and the Government and people of Uganda. He expressed the hope that the meeting would be a great success. In order to strengthen its national wetlands policy, the Government of Uganda was in the process of discussing draft legislation which would facilitate implementation of the Convention. The wide consultations with other government departments and local people with regard to formulation of the national wetlands policy had generated a great deal of awareness; he hoped an occasion might be found for screening a recently produced video concerning wetland policy formulation in Uganda. As a result of funding provided by GEF and the Government of the Netherlands, a detailed wetland inventory was currently under way; this could result in future Ramsar site designations.

The delegation of Chile congratulated the Assistant Secretary General for his excellent work in the production of document DOC. C.5.16, but stressed that the most pertinent questions had only been touched upon during the present meeting. The addition of further sites for the List, while welcome, had implications for the costs of administering the Convention. Analysis of the facts and figures contained in document DOC. C.5.16 showed that not all Contracting Parties were in a position to fulfil all of the obligations arising under the Convention. Before taking on new tasks, there was a need for the Convention to consolidate its existing activities. The North American and Western European regions were more able than most other regions to fulfil the Convention's obligations through their access to financial, institutional and technical advantages. As the number of Contracting Parties to the Convention grew, there was an urgent need to review priorities. The forthcoming workshops would provide an opportunity to seek solutions to basic problems relating to the Wetland Conservation Fund, the establishment of a Scientific Committee and the adequacy of the information contained in the Ramsar wetland database. He emphasized that he was being realistic, not pessimistic, and his intervention was greeted with applause.

The delegation of France announced the future designation of four new Ramsar sites, three of them in Overseas Departments - one in Guadeloupe and a further two in French Guiana. The existing Ramsar site on the shores of Lac Léman would be extended. Criteria for designation of river basins were being studied.

The delegation of Japan firstly congratulated the Bureau for its work in compiling document DOC. C.5.16 and recalled the announcements made earlier in the morning concerning Japan's contribution of 10 million yen to the Wetland Conservation Fund and the designation of five new listed sites. Referring to paragraph 211 of document DOC. C.5.16, regarding the new channel construction plan in the area surrounding Lake Utonai, he emphasized that Japan took its commitments under Ramsar very seriously. The construction itself was still in the planning stage and the related Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had not yet begun. The Japanese delegation could not now consider what kind of environmental influence would take place at Lake Utonai. It was not therefore appropriate to decide at present whether or not to include the site on the Montreux Record and the the Government of Japan did not at present have any intention of including Lake Utonai on the Montreux Record.

The delegation of the UK announced the designation of three additional sites for the List, namely: Hamford Water and Lower Derwent Valley, both in England, and Crymlyn Bog in Wales. The Government of Hong Kong, one of the UK's dependent territories, had accepted in

principle that Mai Po marshes could be considered suitable for designation under the Convention. Following an internal study of the proposed designation, which would lead to public consultations, it was hoped that, if all went well, designation might be achieved around the end of 1994. The delegate confirmed that the UK had formally invited the Ramsar Bureau to apply the Monitoring Procedure to the Dee Estuary on the border between England and Wales. The UK looked forward to fruitful cooperation on the wise use of this highly complex site which was under pressure from industry, recreation, development and shell-fishing.

The delegation of Malta announced the proposed designation of a further wetland site. The pressures faced by small island nations with high population densities was also emphasized.

The delegation of Sri Lanka stressed that considerable progress had been made in the field of wetland conservation, notably completion of a wetland inventory and approval of a law making EIAs necessary for development activities. Steps were being taken to designate two further sites for the Ramsar List in the near future.

The delegation of Brazil announced the addition of three new listed sites, namely Araguaia National Park, Mamiraua Ecological Station and Reentrâncias Maranhenses Environmental Protection Area. Together, these areas covered in excess of 2.5 million hectares.

The delegation of the Russian Federation announced that preparations were being made for designation of a further 28 sites for the List of wetlands of international importance. International cooperation initiatives had been established with China (for joint management of the Lake Khanka Ramsar site), Mongolia, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. The Russian Federation had decided to pay very soon the 1992 contribution of the former USSR to the Convention budget, and it was anticipated that the 1993 contribution would be paid by the end of the year.

With reference to paragraph 241 of document DOC. C.5.16 regarding possible change in the ecological character of Coppename Monding, the delegation of Suriname emphasized that, while there was some concern over economic activities taking place outside the site, it should not be included in the Montreux Record at the present time.

The delegation of Austria noted some activities to be carried out to further implementation of the Convention. These included a contribution to the Wetland Conservation Fund, the compilation of a wetland inventory, translation into German of Professor G.V.T. Matthews' book describing the history of the Convention, and organization of a workshop on wetland monitoring to be held in October 1993 in Linz. 1993 had been designated as the 'Year of Wetlands' and Austria was preparing to designate further Ramsar sites in the near future. 1993 had been declared Wetland Conservation Year, mainly to promote Ramsar. Consideration would also be given to the inclusion of Neusiedlersee on the Montreux Record in the light of changes in agricultural use and groundwater levels.

The observer from Tanzania reported that a seminar financed by IUCN's East African Office had facilitated the exchange of knowledge within the region. The principles of wise use were being applied in preparation for accession to Ramsar. Tanzania felt that Africa should be represented on the Standing Committee by delegates from both English and French speaking countries in the continent. The need for the Bureau to appoint a Technical Officer with responsibility for the African region was reiterated.

The observer from Turkey announced that his country hoped to become a Contracting Party by the end of the year. Reference was also made to the rich variety of wetlands which Turkey possessed and the importance of these areas for migratory birds. He confirmed that the International Wetland Conference announced by the Turkish Head of State at UNCED in Rio would be held in Turkey in the near future.

The observer from Cambodia stressed the difficulties encountered during his country's isolation from the international community for a period of many years. However, the conservation of water resources was now a priority and a recent workshop sponsored by AWB had initiated efforts to increase the governmental and NGO awareness of the importance of wetlands. Finally, Cambodia expressed its keen interest in becoming a Contracting Party.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago noted the impressive level of discussion on conservation issues so far displayed by the Conference and congratulated the Bureau upon the production of an excellent overview of the national reports. It was necessary to find appropriate funding for the building of environmental conservation capacity in the Caribbean region, where wetlands faced particular threats from tourism and other factors. The designated site of Nariva Swamp was under heavy pressure from clearance by rice farmers, and though national courts had prohibited further clearance, areas of wetland had been isolated.

The observer from the Philippines reported on preparations being made for his country to become a Contracting Party. A wetland workshop held in 1992 had led to the formulation of a draft action plan which would hopefully result in establishment of a national wetland policy.

The delegation of Guinea expressed delight that Guinea had become a Contracting Party since the Montreux meeting of the Conference. Transboundary protection of Iles de Tristao in his country and the Bijagos Archipelago in Guinea Bissau was particularly important, but required funding assistance.

The Vice-Chairman expressed appreciation of the information presented by the speakers, especially the news of planned accessions to the Convention and the designation of further Ramsar sites. He hoped that some of the concerns raised would be addressed during the forthcoming workshops, and declared the session closed.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Fourth Session: 10 June 1993, 1400 - 1730

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr R. Smith (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones. Dr Nather Khan

Agenda item X (cont.): Review of Implementation of the Convention

The Vice-Chairman from USA, taking the chair at the Chairman's invitation, opened the session by inviting contributions from NGOs which had registered their desire to speak at the previous plenary session.

The observer from WWF thanked the Vice-Chairman for his generosity in allowing WWF to speak. He emphasized WWF's high level of activity in wetland conservation, currently involving some 250 projects around the world, some of which were highlighted in the brochure distributed to participants. He pointed out that successful wetland conservation depended on the integration of the needs of local people with conservation. WWF congratulated Brazil for joining the Convention and for designating another three sites in addition to the two sites listed at the time of accession. The Amazon was the world's largest river, while the Pantanal was one of the most spectacular wetlands in the world. The participation of Brazil in the Convention was an enormous boost for the treaty. WWF had been disappointed that only half of the Contracting Parties had submitted national reports; it was to be hoped that something could be done to overcome this problem in the future since the review of national reports was an extraordinarily useful analysis of the implementation of the Convention. WWF felt that more attention should be given to wetland conservation problems and that these should be the subject of open discussion. NGOs could play an important role in cooperation with governments, and WWF would be very happy to work with the Contracting Parties and Bureau of the Ramsar Convention to help solve wetland conservation problems.

The Vice-Chairman invited the observer from the Wild Bird Society of Japan to take the floor. The observer from the Wild Bird Society of Japan acknowledged that the Montreux Record was not a black list, but he felt that some Contracting Parties did not want to open up discussion of conservation difficulties at particular sites by placing them on the Montreux Record. Lake Utonai was one of Japan's designated Ramsar sites but was threatened by construction of a flood control channel. The Government of Japan had resisted placing Lake Utonai on the Montreux Record by claiming that the flood control project was only at an early planning stage. Conversely, the Wild Bird Society considered that this would be the most appropriate time to add Utonai to the Montreux Record. The lake had been designated and Japan had to fulfil its obligation to conserve the site.

At the invitation of the Vice-Chairman, the observer from the Audubon Society of Venezuela said that in his country NGOs were helping to promote effective wetland conservation and management. In August 1992, a national wetlands workshop had been held with the support of IUCN. Venezuela also had a National Wetland Committee which included NGO representatives, and which worked to protect wetlands and to avoid the duplication of effort seen in some other countries. His society was involved in compiling a national wetland inventory which would document the current status of coastal wetland resources.

Agenda item VII (cont.): Admission of Observers

At the Vice-Chairman's request, the Secretary General referred to the revised version of document DOC. C.5.10 and read out the names of the inter-governmental, international non-governmental and national non-governmental organizations that had registered since the first plenary session. The Vice-Chairman invited the Conference to admit these organizations, and admission was granted without any objection.

The Secretary General took the opportunity of extending a special welcome to a number of high

level delegates to the meeting.

Agenda item XII: Report of Credentials Committee

The Vice-Chairman then invited the delegation of Senegal, as the Chairman of the Credentials Committee, to present the Committee's report. The delegation of Senegal presented a preliminary report. He stated that the Committee had already examined 40 credentials, of which 26 had been accepted. Several others had been accepted with reservation. Those delegations whose credentials had not yet been approved were asked to assist the Committee with solving outstanding difficulties.

Agenda item XI: Programme and Budget 1994-1996

The Vice-Chairman invited the Assistant Secretary General to present document DOC. C.5.12 'Programme 1994-1996'.

The Assistant Secretary General noted that the Montreux Conference had adopted document DOC. C.4.12, providing for the first time a framework for the activities of the Convention and a clear statement of priorities for action by the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee and Bureau. Document DOC. C.5.12, which had been extensively discussed by the Standing Committee and that the Montreux Record was not a black list, but he felt that some

approved for submission to the Conference, was very similar to document DOC. C.4.12, although a number of amendments had been made. In particular, Attachment 1 provided a suggested form of words for a Kushiro Statement, aimed at placing the Convention in the context of the post-UNCED world. A draft Resolution concerning the Kushiro Statement had been prepared.

Attachment 2 provided the 'Framework for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention' and was similar to the framework adopted at Montreux. Asterisks had been used to indicate the relative priority which the Standing Committee recommended be attached to particular activities.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Assistant Secretary General for his presentation and invited the observers from IUCN, IWRB and UNEP to make brief remarks concerning opportunities for partnership during the coming triennium.

Drawing attention to document INF. C.5.17 the Director General of IUCN reviewed the support which IUCN had provided to the Convention during the last triennium. He referred to the new headquarters building provided for IUCN and the Ramsar Bureau by the generosity of the Swiss Government and suggested that it might be appropriate for the Conference to express its formal appreciation to Switzerland. The Director General of IUCN continued by offering to put services of IUCN's regional and country offices at the disposal of the Convention. He concluded by noting that the Convention needed sufficient financial resources in order to operate effectively. In particular, the Wetland Conservation Fund should be brought up to a level of not less than US\$1 million.

Referring to document document INF. C.5.11, the Director of IWRB noted the important role played by the Convention's partner organizations. These partners continued to meet with the

Bureau on a regular basis with the aim of strengthening the technical work of the Convention. IWRB had provided significant technical support over the last triennium, notably through maintenance of the Ramsar sites database under contract to the Bureau. Establishment of the database was now complete and outputs such as the new four-volume 'Directory of Wetlands of International Importance' had been generated. During the forthcoming workshops, IWRB would be conveying the results of recent work on the question of ecological change in wetlands, while a draft review of population estimates for water birds of the world had been distributed to all delegations. IWRB was committed to providing even more support to the Convention in the future but hoped that more emphasis could be placed on training matters.

Referring to results from the 1992 UNCED meeting in Rio, the observer from UNEP noted that the Ramsar concept of 'wise use' coincided perfectly with the aims and objectives of Agenda 21. He challenged the Convention to seek new partnerships in the future and referred to the role played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Ramsar Convention should be able to locate a window of opportunity within the GEF framework, even though GEF was specifically linked to the two new treaties covering Climate Change and Biological Diversity. The Ramsar Convention could play a major role in achieving the aims of these treaties in relation to wetlands.

At the invitation of the Vice-Chairman and responding to the presentation made by the Director General of IUCN, the delegate of Denmark indicated that Denmark would be delighted to sponsor a recommendation thanking Switzerland for its generous provision of a new headquarters building for IUCN and the Ramsar Bureau.

At the invitation of the Vice-Chairman, the Secretary General introduced documents DOC. C.5.13 (Rev.1) on 'Financial and Budgetary Matters' and DOC. C.5.15 concerning 'Secretariat Matters'. Document DOC. C.5.13 had been revised owing to the accession of several new Contracting Parties since the first version of the paper had been drawn up.

The Secretary General drew attention to Attachment 4* which provided copies of the Auditor's reports for the last three years. He expressed his sincere thanks to IUCN's financial services for their efficient work in maintaining the Convention's accounts. Attachment 5* showed in chart form the contributions received from Contracting Parties during the triennium. In 1991 invoices had been sent out for a total of 1.1 million SFR, almost all of which had been received. This had been particularly gratifying in the first year of a new triennium. 1992 had not been quite so good, although it had been pleasing to hear from the delegation of the Russian Federation in the previous plenary session that this country would pay the 1992 contribution of the former USSR very soon. The Secretary General noted that the figures presented for 1993 omitted the recently received contribution of South Africa.

The remainder of document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev 1) presented the budgetary proposals for the next triennium. As with the programme documentation, the budget had been prepared by a sub-committee of the Standing Committee and had been reviewed by the full Standing Committee at its 1992 meeting in Kushiro. It had also been reviewed at the Regional Preparatory Meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Neotropical Region. The Standing Committee had approved forwarding the budget to the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

The proposed budget represented a considerable increase over that adopted at Montreux, but virtually no increase over current expenditure. At the present time, a small number of countries

funded the difference between actual expenditure and the amount available from the core budget. This project support was very gratifying, but not reliable in the long term. The Standing Committee had considered that the proposed new budget would represent a more equitable arrangement.

The draft resolution contained within document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev 1) was virtually the same as that adopted at Montreux, while Attachment 1 showed the actual and budgeted expenditure for budget lines during the last triennium. The Secretary General briefly mentioned each of the main budget lines, noting that staff costs accounted for the largest single item of expenditure. Although there was still a budget line for a Conference of the Parties, this was poorly endowed and had not been increased to a more realistic level, as it had been felt that an increase of this magnitude would have been unacceptable. This would mean continued reliance upon support from the host of each meeting of the Conference. The scale of contributions to the budget was based on the scale used by the United Nations and a series of explanatory notes was attached.

Turning to document DOC. C.5.15, the Secretary General reiterated that staffing was the biggest item of expenditure in the budget and including present staff within the core budget was the main reason for the budget increase. The Standing Committee had expressed its full satisfaction with the current secretariat arrangements and had not considered it necessary to repeat the resolution adopted at Montreux.

During the last triennium, Bureau staff had increased from six to fourteen positions (several of which were part-time), but this increase had been funded by short-term projects which were mostly due to terminate in 1993. The Secretary General noted that the tremendous growth in the last three years in the number of Contracting Parties and listed sites had substantially increased the work load of the secretariat, as had mechanisms such as the Wetland Conservation Fund, the Montreux Record, the Monitoring Procedure and the increase in regional coordination activities under the Convention. There was particular need for the Bureau to maintain and enhance its level of work in the Asian and Neotropical regions and African delegates had already drawn attention to the need for an African Technical Officer. The Bureau needed to reflect an appropriate range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and this needed to be borne in mind by the Conference. In consultation with the Standing Committee, and on the basis of programme documentation, a mid-term staffing requirement of 15 people had been identified, including four Technical Officers with thematic and regional responsibilities. The proposed budget 1994-1996 would cover 10 of these posts, so project support would still be required.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Secretary General for his presentation and asked the Assistant Secretary General to present document DOC. C.5.14 on 'Standing Committee Matters'.

The Assistant Secretary General recalled that the Standing Committee had been established to oversee the work of the Convention between Conferences of the Contracting Parties. At Montreux, Alternate Representatives for each of the seven regions had been elected for the first time, in the interests of providing enhanced representation and improved continuity. They normally attended meetings of the Standing Committee, so that in practice, each region was represented by two Contracting Parties.

Although at Montreux some concern over the geographical distribution of regions had been raised with regard to Eastern and Western Europe, the Pan-European Regional Meeting held at Lelystad in 1992 had recommended that no changes be made for the time being, in view of the

ongoing changes in Eastern Europe. The resolution adopted at Montreux could therefore stand, subject to possible amendment of the footnote to the resolution.

The Vice-Chairman invited comments on the four documents which had been presented, noting that participants would have a further opportunity to discuss these matters during the next plenary session.

The delegation of Denmark stated that the delegations of Belgium, Senegal, Sweden and Denmark had prepared a number of amendments to document DOC. C.5.12 and would submit these in writing and introduce them at the appropriate time.

The delegation of Brazil emphasized that the Framework document (Attachment 2 to document DOC. C.5.12) should encourage south-south cooperation as well as north-south links. Referring to page 8 of Attachment 2 to document DOC. C.5.12, the delegation of Senegal suggested that regional meetings be given a higher priority.

The Vice-Chairman invited participants to comment on documents DOC. C.5.13 and DOC. C.5.15.

In reply to a question from the delegation of Brazil, the Secretary General stated that the United Nations' scale of assessment had been adopted for use by the Convention following a recommendation from a task force set up prior to the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

In response to a question from the Belgian delegation, the Secretary General agreed that sample invoices with provision for additional voluntary contributions could be provided to participants, as had been done at the Lelystad meeting in 1992.

The delegation of the United Kingdom expressed considerable concern over the proposed budget. Although the proposed budget increase was modest in absolute terms, the percentage increase was around 100%. The United Kingdom could not endorse this level of increase and recommended that steps be taken to ensure that the new budget generated outputs corresponding to the level in increase. Absorbing project-funded activities into the core budget might sometimes be justified, but could lead to appeals for successive budgetary increases. The United Kingdom had been pleased to see budget lines for the Monitoring Procedure and Wetland Conservation Fund, but believed that staffing and organizational structure of the Bureau needed to be scrutinized carefully.

Referring to the 'expert services' budget line of document DOC. C.5.13, the delegate of Trinidad and Tobago expressed concern that the Convention should not focus too much attention upon the use of external consultants. Wherever possible expertise from within a particular region should be used. Replying to this point, the Secretary General noted that the budget line contained relatively low sums, most of which went to IWRB for maintenance of the Ramsar sites database. The Bureau indeed tried to use experts from within the appropriate region in carrying out Monitoring Procedure missions.

The delegations of Australia and Canada shared some of the apprehensions raised by the delegation of the United Kingdom, noting the large percentage increase sought in the proposed budget. The delegation of Canada called for the establishment of a mechanism to increase

coordination of the Bureau's programme with that of its partner organizations.

The delegation of New Zealand felt that there was a need to examine carefully the apparent shift in the use of the Convention budget from administrative towards technical activities. The delegation of New Zealand also called for examination of the placement of regional Technical Officers; access might be improved if these officers were located within the regions rather than at the Bureau headquarters.

The delegation of Mexico expressed concern over the proposed level of increase in the Mexican contribution, which would be difficult to approve, given the budgetary restrictions currently facing the country.

The delegation of Austria reflected the concerns already expressed by the delegates of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom and asked for further clarification from the Bureau with regard to the proposed budget. The delegation also asked the Bureau to check whether Austria's 1993 contribution had been received, since payment had been made some time ago.

The delegation of Germany thanked the Bureau and Standing Committee for preparing the budget, which Germany had studied intensively. However, the proposed increase of 100% caused some difficulty and the delegation of Germany shared concerns similar to those raised by the delegation of the United Kingdom and other delegations.

The delegation of the Netherlands noted that many Western European countries had expressed concern over the budget. However it was necessary to remember that the Convention would probably have around 100 Contracting Parties at some time in the next triennium and that a core staff of 10 people was an extremely modest team to support this increase. It was necessary to look not only at percentage increase but also at the absolute figures.

The delegation of Japan indicated that his country shared the concerns raised by the United Kingdom.

The delegation of Brazil expressed agreement with the Mexican delegation, noting that the proposed budgetary increase would cause difficulties. He urged that some budget lines be revised in order to streamline the proposed budget.

The delegation of Panama shared the concerns of other Contracting Parties, and emphasized that it was necessary to ensure that as much work as possible was carried out on the ground.

The delegation of India agreed with the delegate of Brazil that 100% increase was difficult to approve, especially if payment was to be in hard currency.

The delegation of the USA was concerned that conservation measures should have high priority and advocated much enhanced technical links with the Bureau's partner organizations. The USA suggested that an administrative committee might be established to examine the proposed budget in detail and to present a revised recommendation to the next plenary session.

The delegation of Switzerland felt that the budgetary increase could and should be accepted if the Contracting Parties wished the Convention to continue to be serviced and strengthened both quantitatively and qualitatively. The proposed increase was relatively modest in view of the

recent large increase in the number of Contracting Parties.

In response to a question raised by the delegation of Switzerland about annual increments in staff salaries, the Secretary General stated that Ramsar Bureau staff had the same contracts of employment as those for IUCN staff. The Secretary General emphasized that the proposed budget would not result in the recruitment of any new staff; on the contrary, if the budget was rejected, certain staff posts would have to be cut. The Bureau had indeed tried to seek alternative sources of funding but, for example, an approach to the Global Environment Facility had not proved successful.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the participants for their comments and announced that he would be appointing an administrative committee to review the budget. This committee would be composed of the delegations of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands, Poland, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and under the Chairmanship of Denmark. The observers from IUCN and IWRB, as the Bureau's closest technical partners, would also be invited to participate. The Vice-Chairman then declared the session closed.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Fifth Session: 14 June 1993, 0900 - 1230

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr L. Mason (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Mr R.C. Prentice, Ms C.M. Samuel

The Chairman thanked the Prefecture of Hokkaido for organizing the previous day's excursions and the business community for hosting the evening reception and cultural events. This was endorsed by the Secretary General who then apologized, on behalf of the Secretariat, to Spanish-speaking delegates for any shortcomings in the original Spanish Conference documentation. He stressed that this in no way reflected on the translators working at the present meeting who had not been responsible for the first version of the Spanish texts. The Secretariat was now working to resolve the problem and Spanish-speaking participants would receive a full set of documents as soon as possible.

Agenda item VII (cont.): Admission of Observers

The Chairman invited the Secretary General to present this item. Turning to the most recent revision of document DOC. C.5.10, the Secretary General pointed out that this document now included the full list of observers actually attending the Conference. He was also pleased to announce the arrival of observers from the non-member states of Honduras, Malaysia, Myanmar and Saudi Arabia. In the absence of any objections from the floor, the Chairman admitted all of the observers listed in document DOC. C.5.10 and extended a particular welcome to the observers from non-member states.

Agenda item XII (cont.): Report of Credentials Committee

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Credentials Committee to present a report. However, owing to the late submission of some letters of accreditation, the Credentials Committee had been unable to prepare a final report and the Chairman asked that he be given an opportunity to make a presentation in a later session.

Agenda item XVI: Adoption of Conference Report and Decisions

The Chairman invited participants to comment upon the four summary reports of the Plenary Session of 9 and 10 June (documents PLEN. C.5.1 - C.5.4) which had been circulated to them.

The delegation of Belgium made one minor comment in relation to the omission of Bulgaria from page three of the French version of document PLEN. C.5.1 concerning membership of the Credentials Committee.

The Secretariat confirmed that a written amendment to document PLEN. C.5.2 had been received from the delegation of Brazil and would be incorporated into the final version of the report.

Referring to document PLEN. C.5.3, the delegation of the UK, asked that the text of its statement concerning the potential designation of Mai Po marshes in Hong Kong for the Ramsar List be included in its entirety in the final report.

There being no further comments, the Conference then adopted all four summary reports of Plenary Sessions, subject to the amendments requested. The Assistant Secretary General asked the Conference to permit the Secretariat to make minor editorial changes where appropriate in preparing these and other documents for publication in the Proceedings of the Conference. At the invitation of the Chairman the Conference duly authorized the Secretariat to make such amendments.

Agenda item XIII: Reports of Workshops

The Chairman invited the Co-Chairpersons of the four Workshops to present brief reports.

The Co-Chairpersons of Workshop A (the delegations of Spain and Hungary) presented document W.G. C.5.1. The Workshop had agreed to forward draft recommendations REC. C.5.1 and 5.2 and draft resolutions RES. C.5.5 and 5.6 for discussion by the Plenary Session.

The delegations of Germany, Japan and Jordan asked for the inclusion of amendments in the final version of document W.G. C.5.1.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago asked that the final Workshop report reflect the fact that the Convention had only entered into force for that country in April 1993 and this was why no national report had been produced.

The Secretariat assured the delegation of Hungary that the written amendments which it had submitted would be incorporated in the final text of document W.G. C.5.1.

The delegation of the USA emphasized that the USA had no objection to the Everglades being

placed on the Montreux Record, and also stressed that the US authorities were already doing their utmost to restore the site. The Workshop report should be amended to reflect this. The observer from the National Audubon Society supported the inclusion of the Everglades in the Montreux Record, and paid tribute to the efforts of the US Government to improve the conservation status of the site.

The observer from Friends of the Earth requested that document W.G. C.5.1 be amended to reflect his intervention during Workshop A concerning Salinas de Ibiza (Balearic Islands, Spain).

The observer from Turkey asked that his statement during Workshop A, concerning the necessity for cross-frontier management of the wetland known as the Evros Delta in Greece and as the Meriç Delta in Turkey, be included in document W.G. C.5.1.

The Co-Chairpersons of Workshop B (the delegations of Kenya and Netherlands) then presented document W.G. C.5.2 noting that the Workshop had agreed to forward two draft resolutions (RES. C.5.7 and 5.8) to the Plenary Session. Amendments were proposed by the delegations of Algeria, France, Ireland, Japan and South Africa and the observers from Cyprus, ADAME and WWF. In response to a request from the delegation of the USA, the Chairman agreed to postpone discussion of the revised Annex to draft resolution RES. C.5.8 in order to allow the conclusions of a drafting group to be included.

The Co-Chairpersons of Workshop C (the delegations of Tunisia and Venezuela) then presented document W.G. C.5.3, noting that draft recommendations REC. C.5.3, 5.8 and 5.10, and draft resolution RES. C.5.9 had been forwarded to the Plenary Session.

The delegation of Panama thanked the Workshop for its efforts in formulating general guidelines in the spirit of voluntary adoption and congratulated the delegation of France on its clear presentation on management plans, but noted the resource implications of establishing such plans. The delegation of Spain emphasized the non-compulsory nature of the guidelines on management planning.

The observer from Wetland Link International pointed out that its presentation had referred to wetland reserves, including Ramsar sites. The Assistant Secretary General apologized that it had not been stated in W.G. C.5.3 that the penultimate presentation in Workshop C had been made by the Pointe-à-Pierre Wildfowl Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, and promised to correct the text accordingly.

At the Chairman's request, the Conference adopted documents W.G. C.5.1, W.G. C.5.2 and W.G. C.5.3, subject to the inclusion of the amendments specified above.

The Co-Chairpersons of Workshop D (the delegations of Pakistan and France) presented document W.G. C.5.4 noting that draft recommendations REC. C.5.4, 5.5 and 5.9 and draft resolution RES. C.5.11 had been forwarded to the Plenary Session.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago could not support the proposal to allow countries whose economies were in transition to have access to the Wetland Conservation Fund; the Fund should be restricted to use by developing countries. The delegations of Sweden and the USA considered that the scope of the Fund could be widened providing that recipient states met the

criteria stipulated by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) for assistance to developing countries.

Following requests for many substantive amendments requested by the delegations of Brazil, Canada, India, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Netherlands and South Africa, as well as the observer from WWF, the Secretary General confirmed that a revised version of W.G. C.5.4 would be distributed for consideration by a later Plenary Session.

This concluded discussion of Workshop Reports and the Chairman closed the session.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Sixth Session: 14 June 1993, 1400 - 1730

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr L. Mason (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Mr S.D. Nash, Mr R.C. Prentice, Ms C.M. Samuel

Agenda item XI (cont.): Programme and Budget 1994-1996

The Vice-Chairman from the USA, taking the chair at the request of the Chairman, invited the Chairman of the Administrative Committee (the delegation of Denmark) to introduce document INF. C.5.31, the committee's report (see Annex).

The Chairman of the Conference Administrative Committee thanked the committee members for their hard work and careful deliberation. He also thanked the Secretariat for providing the Committee with all of the information required. Referring to document INF. C.5.31, he outlined three budget options for consideration: (a) a slightly amended version of the original budget put forward by the Standing Committee, envisaging 10 Bureau staff funded from the core budget throughout the triennium; (b) a reduction in core-funded Bureau staff from 10 to 8; (c) a phased increase in core-funded Bureau staff from 8 in 1994 to 10 in 1996.

Invited by the Vice-Chairman to make additional remarks, the Secretary General recognized the existence of a world-wide economic recession and the implications that this might have for the Contracting Parties in setting a budget. However, he called upon the Conference to take account of the growing workload of the Bureau and the additional expectations which would arise from decisions taken at the present meeting. He provided more detail on the operational implications of each of the three budgetary options contained in INF C.5.31, noting particularly that options 2 and 3 would mean that at least one and possibly two positions (those of Spanish-speaking Secretary and Wise Use Technical Officer) would be lost. It would be difficult to provide liaison support for the various regions and there would clearly be a negative effect on the Bureau's ability to implement its programme adequately.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Secretary General for this additional information and invited comments from the floor.

The delegation of Panama expressed the wish that technical staff with responsibility for the Neotropical region should be covered by core funding in view of the insecure nature of project funds. In response, the Secretary General gave an assurance that, as this post had been funded under the core budget for 1991-1993, he would wish to see this continue into the next triennium. However, he stressed that unless the first option was adopted, the core budget could not support technical officers for other regions.

The delegation of Pakistan questioned the cost-effectiveness of option 2 and sought clarification on option 3 and the phased increase of Bureau staffing levels. He also noted with regret that during earlier plenary discussions, several members of the Standing Committee had expressed reservations over the budget which the Standing Committee had been responsible for preparing.

The delegation of New Zealand requested that the Standing Committee in consultation with the Bureau develop documentation spelling out the Bureau's strategy, mission and priorities in relation to its resource requirements. In response, the Secretary General agreed and reminded participants of the present procedures. He undertook that the Bureau would strive to implement this suggestion to the best of its ability.

Noting that there did not appear to be any support for option 2 (reduction of core staff from 10 to 8 posts), the Vice-Chairman proposed that this option be dropped from those under consideration. In the absence of any intervention to the contrary, this proposal was accepted and the Chairman invited further comments on options 1 and 3.

The delegation of Iceland announced that it would support the original budget, now reflected in option 1 (document INF. C.5.31), and that Iceland would also make a voluntary contribution to the Wetland Conservation Fund, equivalent to ten times its annual contribution to the Convention budget. This announcement was greeted with appreciative applause from the floor.

The delegation of the USA also had no objections to the original budget and he welcomed the statement from the delegation of Iceland in relation to the Wetland Conservation Fund. However, he noted that many of the projects submitted to the Bureau and Standing Committee for consideration for support from the Fund, had been inadequate. He supported the establishment of a scientific/technical panel to review all projects submitted to the Fund.

The delegation of Sweden supported budget option 1, but because of the scale of the increase, he envisaged problems in making voluntary contributions to certain budget lines.

The delegation of Norway endorsed the view of Sweden, but expressed his preference for an even more substantial budget which was also sufficient for covering the costs of the next meeting of the Conference and of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

The delegation of Austria also supported option 1, but noted that Austria's voluntary contributions might need to be reduced. It requested clarification about the impact of voluntary contributions in the future should this option be accepted.

The delegation of India felt that the heavy workload of the Bureau was of major concern. It supported option 1, although it was still concerned that this option did not supply funds to cover adequately the provision of technical expertise.

The delegation of Mexico supported option 1, but noted that owing to Mexico's financial restrictions the level of increase might cause certain difficulties.

The Vice-Chairman inquired if any delegates wished to support option 3. Noting the lack of support for that option, the Vice-Chairman proposed that a financial resolution be prepared providing option 1 for final adoption by the Conference. There being no interventions to the contrary, the Vice-Chairman announced that this proposal was accepted.

Agenda item XIV (cont.): Consideration of Conference Decisions

The Vice-Chairman then invited the Assistant Secretary General to introduce the draft resolutions to be considered.

After extensive discussion, the following decisions were made:

- RES. C.5.1. (Framework/Kushiro Statement): to be forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of a reference to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- RES. C.5.2. (Budget): to be prepared on the basis of budget option 1, contained in document INF. C.5.31.
- There would be no resolutions concerning Standing Committee matters or Secretariat matters.
- RES. C.5.5. (Initial Designation of Sites): to be forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of minor amendments. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.3.
- RES. C.5.6. (Montreux Record): to be forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of amendments put forward by the delegations of South Africa and United Kingdom. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.4.
- RES. C.5.7. (Scientific and Technical Review Panel): there was wide-spread support for setting up such a panel, but owing to difficulties in agreeing a final wording, a small drafting group chaired by Belgium, with representatives from the delegations of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, the Netherlands and Tunisia, and the observer from IWRB, was established. The drafting group would forward a revised draft Resolution for consideration by the final plenary session. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.5.
- RES. C.5.8. (Wise Use of Wetlands): as with RES. C.5.7, several proposals for amendment were put forward. The Vice-Chairman therefore asked the delegation of France, the Chairman of the Wise Use Working Group and the Assistant Secretary General to produce a revised draft. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.6.
- RES. C.5.9. (Management Planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands): to be forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of certain

amendments. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.7.

- RES. C.5.11. (Wetland Conservation Fund): to be forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of certain amendments, notably the proposal of the delegation of Kenya that the language in square brackets in the operative section be replaced. This amendment would specify that the Fund should be for use by developing countries and that countries whose economies were in transition should seek assistance through bilateral arrangements with developed countries. The delegation of Kenya undertook to supply the Secretariat with the appropriate wording which was accepted by the delegation of Hungary and other delegations seeking an expanded coverage of the Fund. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.8.
- RES. C.5.12. (Application of Ramsar Criteria): forwarded for adoption by the final plenary session, subject to inclusion of certain amendments. This draft Resolution was renumbered RES. C.5.9.

The Vice-Chairman noted that time was extremely short and that the present session would not be able to discuss the draft recommendations. He asked that participants who wished to comment on, or amend any of the draft Recommendations, should provide written submissions to the Secretariat as soon as possible. The Secretariat would then prepare revised drafts for consideration at the final plenary session.

There being no further business, the Vice-Chairman closed the session.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Conference Finance Committee met throughout the day on Friday, 11 June, and again on Saturday afternoon, 12 June and Monday morning, 14 June.

Participants: Denmark Mr Veit Koester (Chairman)

Australia Mr Bill Phillips

Brazil Mr Everton Vargas

Canada Ms Janice Kostash

Germany Dr Christiane Paulus

Kenya Mr Anderson Koyo

Japan Mr Yoshihiro Natori

Dr Makoto Komoda

Mr Keiji Fukuda

Mr Kazuho Kawamata

Mexico Mr Eleazar Loa-Loza

Netherlands Dr Gerard Boere

Poland Mr Zygmunt Krzeminski

UK Ms Hilary Neal

IUCN Dr Martin Holdgate

IWRB Dr Michael Moser

Conference Mr Daniel Navid

Bureau Ms Julia Tucker

Mr Simon Nash

The Committee reviewed the budgetary information contained in Conference Document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1) placed before the Conference as well as the staffing paper (DOC. C.5.15).

Some members of the Committee expressed their support for the proposed budget for the 1994-1996 triennium as contained in DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1). Other members however voiced concern about the difficulties posed by the large increase over the previous triennium's budget in percentage terms and concern was also expressed by certain members about the increase in monetary terms.

The Committee reviewed in great detail the costs involved to meet Programme obligations, the Secretariat providing considerable background information on each budget line. The Committee had thorough discussions on staff functions, and the Bureau's administrative load in running an international office, working in several languages. There was some discussion also on the need or otherwise to have a contingency fund.

An information paper was presented by the Secretariat in support of its explanations, notably a description of current and proposed staff positions with an indication of whether the posts were core or project funded at present and which posts were open.

Representatives from IUCN and IWRB were invited to join the meeting at the beginning of Friday afternoon and while they both expressed great interest and willingness in working closely with the Bureau, even to a greater extent than in the past, they stressed that this would only be feasible if there were a sufficiently well-staffed Bureau to ensure proper coordination and cooperation.

The Committee concentrated its discussions on the budgetary implications of the staffing of the Bureau in relation to Convention work at hand as at the beginning of this Meeting of the Conference of the Parties; it did not consider the budgetary consequences of any new activities arising from Kushiro Resolutions and Recommendations.

The Committee nevertheless reviewed draft Resolution RES. 5.2 as contained in Conference

Document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1) and agreed to propose the amendment to the second operative paragraph of Resolution RES. 5.2 from:

- 'AGREES to the scale of contributions of the Contracting Parties to the Convention as listed in Attachment 2'

to:

- 'ADOPTS for the next triennium the scale of contributions of the Contracting Parties to the Convention as listed in Attachment 2'.

The Committee further agreed to recommend the preparation of an additional attachment to DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1) which would call for the Standing Committee to present a report to the next Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on alternatives to the use of the United Nations scale of contributions to calculate the contribution of each Party to the Convention budget, taking into consideration the need for an equitable burden sharing among the Parties and the situation of developing countries.

The Committee did not consider that there were other problems in the draft Resolution, except to draw attention to the possibility of the need to amend operative paragraph 6 (about additional voluntary payments to the Convention budget to cover the Monitoring Procedure, the Conference of the Parties/ delegate travel, and the Wetland Conservation Fund) and operative

paragraph 9 (on future staffing of the Bureau) in the light of the final decision of the Plenary Session on the budget for the coming triennium.

Further the Committee agreed to recommend to the Plenary Session that the wording of operative paragraph 9 of draft Resolution RES. 5.2 should confirm the authority of the Secretary General, under the guidance of the Standing Committee, to seek support for additional staff to carry out necessary Programme requirements. The Finance Committee did not consider that it would be useful at this point to prejudge the number of additional staff needed.

The Committee recognized that there could be a series of budgetary options put to the Plenary Session, ranging from:

- maintaining the status quo with the budget approved by the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Montreux, 1990)

to:

- accepting the budget proposed in Conference Document DOC. C.5.13

After lengthy discussion however the meeting agreed that it would be appropriate to present to the Plenary Session for consideration three budgetary options for the 1994-1996 triennium:

1st Option

The first option is virtually as provided in Conference Document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1) with a

slightly amended presentation.

2nd Option

The second option represents a reduction from 10 to 8 in core staffing levels covered by the proposed budget in Conference Document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1).

DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1) presented a budget proposal for 7 professional and 3 support staff to be covered by the core budget throughout the 1994-1996 triennium whereas this second option suggests 6 professional and 2 support staff throughout the triennium.

Other budgetary items directly related to staff numbers have been similarly reduced in this option.

3rd Option

The third option represents a phasing in of Bureau staff posts over the 1994-1996 triennium, allowing for:

- 8 staff in 1994
- 9 in 1995 which will cover the addition of the outstanding support post
- 10, the full complement, in 1996 as envisaged in DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 1),

namely the addition of the outstanding professional post.

Consequently the 1995 and 1996 annual budget lines have been augmented over those in 1994 in the light of this phased increase in staff positions to cover other budgetary lines directly related to staff numbers.

Attached are the three options along with the table of applicable national contributions relating to each option. [omitted here]

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Seventh Session: 15 June 1993, 0900 - 1230

Chairmen: Prof T. Satoo (Japan), Prof Y. Oshima (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr L. Mason (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Dr S. Kobayashi, Mr Y. Natori

Rapporteur: Ms K. Kanagawa

Agenda item XV: Wetland conservation in Japan

Prof T. Satoo, Chairman of the Conference, introduced Prof Yasuyuki Oshima of Waseda

University, Tokyo (President of the Ecological Society of Japan), and invited him to take the chair for Japan Day.

1. Conservation of wetlands in Japan

The first presentation was made by Mr. S. Takahashi, Director of the Office of the Natural Environment Survey, Environment Agency, who mainly focused on the survey of nature conducted by the Agency since 1973. He said that the survey had recorded significant changes and loss of wetlands, especially tidal mudflats, throughout Japan. The Agency had started the fifth stage of its Nationwide Survey of Nature in 1993, with special emphasis on wetlands. He also described conservation systems and newly designated Ramsar sites in Japan. The importance of public education for increasing awareness of wetlands was pointed out during discussion.

2. Conservation of wetlands in Hokkaido

The first presentation under this topic was made by Prof T. Tsujii of Hokkaido University. He described various wetland types and the distinctive fauna and flora of wetlands in Hokkaido. The largest wetlands had developed in the Ishikari basin and along the Kushiro and Teshio rivers. Other characteristic wetland types had developed on estuaries and along the coast in sites such as Furen River and Kiritappu. There were also many small bogs in mountain districts and fens in the lowlands. Particularly in Ishikari district most wetlands had already been transformed into agricultural land. In conclusion, Prof Tsujii said that it would be highly desirable to establish hydrological and hydrochemical monitoring of land-use practices in areas surrounding the biologically important areas of wetlands.

Mr M. Tada, Director of the Nature Preservation Division of the Hokkaido Prefectural Government, then described the major wetland related activities carried out recently by the Hokkaido Prefectural Government: 1) setting up guidelines for wetland protection; 2) inventory of wetlands in Hokkaido; 3) development of research and of techniques for conservation and management of wetlands; and 4) organizing an international wetland workshop in August 1992.

The final presentation under this topic was given by Prof H. Yamaguchi from Hokkai Gakuen University. He introduced land use schemes in two different types of wetland, Ishikari Plain and Kushiro Marsh. Ishikari Plain had been utilized as paddy fields because of its climate, geological and social conditions. Kushiro Marsh had also been utilized as a flood control basin thus strengthening its natural function and maintaining good natural conditions. These land uses had been facilitated by river works which had protected residents and property in these areas from flooding. He suggested that such land use management could be considered as an example of wise use. During the discussion, some delegates and NGO representatives expressed the view that the effects of construction on the ecology of the wetlands should be carefully considered before implementation of development plans.

3. The first Ramsar site in Japan, Kushiro-shitsugen (marsh)

Mr M. Komaru, Chief Management Officer of the Kushiro-shitsugen National Park Office, started his presentation by explaining the process leading to the designation of national parks in Japan. It was necessary to obtain the agreement of municipalities and local citizens. He then stressed the importance of the catchment approach for wetland conservation. Regarding

Kushiro-shitsugen, he said its conservation situation was far from ideal, considering the degradation of the surrounding catchment. However, he presented a series of measures taken or to be taken for the conservation of Kushiro Marsh. Research facilities and an advisory committee had been established and a conservation education programme was under way. He concluded that there were many approaches but that it was rather too early to say which was the best and which was unacceptable. Concern over plans for many golf courses around Kushiro Marsh were expressed by the delegation of Pakistan and Mr Komaru answered that no golf courses would be permitted within the Special Protection Area of the National Park.

Mr W. Johjya, Mayor of Tsurui Village, introduced the conservation history of the Japanese Crane *Grus japonensis*, and the concerns of the local people. The Japanese Crane had once been considered an extinct species. A few individuals had been rediscovered 70 years ago, and since then local people had continued to feed cranes with corn seeds in winter, when they might otherwise starve to death. According to a recent census in which many children and students had assisted, more than 600 individuals had been identified.

Mr S. Yamamoto of the Japan Bird Banding Association explained the conservation scheme for Blakiston's Fish Owl *Ketupa blakistoni* in eastern Hokkaido with a video presentation. Many nest boxes had been installed throughout the species' habitats and some artificial fish ponds established. However, destruction of forest areas was the main threat to the survival of

the species. Some countermeasures had been taken to prevent losses from traffic accidents and electrocution from overhead wires.

The last presentation of the morning session was given by Mr Y. Ogawa, Vice-President of the Nature Conservation Society of Kushiro, who explained the history of the society and the research activities it had conducted for conservation of Kushiro Marsh. The late Prof Mizuho Tanaka of Hokkaido University of Education had recognized the value of Kushiro Marsh and had begun an appeal for its conservation. In the Kushiro District, a special committee had been formed by one city and nine towns or local village bodies in 1972, and committee members had agreed to divide Kushiro Marsh into nature conservation and development areas. The conservation area had later become the main area designated under the Ramsar Convention and Kushiro-shitsugen National Park.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Eighth Session: 15 June 1993, 1400 - 1730

Chairmen: Prof T. Satoo (Japan), Prof Y. Oshima (Japan)

Secretariat: Dr S. Kobayashi, Mr Y. Natori

Rapporteur: Ms K. Kanagawa

Agenda item XV (cont.): Wetland conservation in Japan

Continuing in the chair at the invitation of Prof Satoo, Prof Oshima introduced the afternoon's speakers.

4. A project to restore Izunuma-Uchinuma Marsh to its original state

Mr T. Shibasaki, Chief Research Worker of the Miyagi Prefectural Izunuma-Uchinuma Environmental Conservation Foundation, gave a presentation on the efforts made for the conservation of Izunuma-Uchinuma Marsh, the second wetland listed as a Ramsar site in Japan. The lake faced problems including significant damage to important waterfowl food resources such as Indian rice *Zizania latifolia* caused by past development, in addition to water pollution caused by agriculture activities. He explained two conservation systems being conducted by the Miyagi Prefectural Izunuma-Uchinuma Environmental Conservation Foundation: 'Recovering nature in Izunuma-Uchinuma Marsh based on the character of plants' restored the important food source on land purchased by the government, while 'Conservation feeding ponds' provided feeding sites and surveys of water quality.

5. The establishment of Lake Utonai bird sanctuary

Mr N. Ichida, of the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ), explained the history of the establishment of the first bird sanctuary in Japan, Lake Utonai. The WBSJ was preparing a management plan as required under Article 3 of the Ramsar Convention. However, Lake Utonai faced the possibility of being affected by the construction of the Chitose River Diversion Channel, which was planned by the Hokkaido Development Agency. He stressed that the construction of this flood control channel would not only result in loss of natural values, but would trigger a sequence of dynamic changes to the environment, such as alteration of the climate. Among other questions, the delegation of the United States suggested that the Japanese government and NGOs could perhaps learn from California's experience with a similar project in which diversion of a river course brought unexpected changes in the ecology of the basin.

6. Kutcharo-ko: Relationship between swans and local people

Mr N. Yamaguchi, Wildlife Protection Official of Hamatonbetsu, described the beautiful natural conditions of Kutcharo-ko, the third designated Ramsar site in Japan and the affection of the local residents for the lake. Because of loss of habitat in other areas, migratory waterfowl, especially Whistling Swans *Cygnus columbianus*, gathered in large numbers at Lake Kutcharo. He explained that the lake surface froze over in the winter, which contributed to loss of food resources and possible starvation of the swans. Sympathizing with the plight of the swans, members of the local community had been replanting trees and food crops for the swans in the surrounding area. In response to a question from the delegation of Pakistan concerning the consequences of artificial feeding and changes in the diet of waterfowl, Mr Yamaguchi described the seriousness of the lack of food resources, and assured the questioner that the supplemental feeding programme considered the nutritional demands of the swans.

7. Wetland conservation in Asia

Mr. S.A. Hussain from the Asian Wetland Bureau gave an overview of wetland conservation in Asia. Asia contained at least 120 million hectares of wetlands, of which only 15% were considered free of threat and as many as 50% were considered to be under moderate or serious threat. Despite their many values, mangrove ecosystems were among the most seriously threatened wetlands in Asia. The current wetland situation was so severe that urgent action was needed immediately, simultaneously and at all levels throughout the region. Many international organizations were involved with the conservation of Asian wetlands. AWB and IWRB

coordinated the monitoring of waterfowl populations throughout Asia and had organized workshops, symposia and training courses in the region. AWB had recently initiated a South Asia Wetland Conservation Programme.

8. Global wetland monitoring through remote sensing

Dr Y. Yasuoka, of the National Institute for Environmental Studies, Environment Agency of Japan, described the application of remote sensing technology to the study of change in wetland vegetation. Images obtained from LANDSAT TM could be used to map the distribution of vegetation types, as well as other physical, biological and social factors. As a case study, Dr Yasuoka described studies made in 1992 of the seasonal changes in vegetation in and around Kushiro Marsh. Comparisons made between 1992 images and those obtained in 1972 allowed a general evaluation of changes in vegetation conditions over the last two decades. In addition, Dr Yasuoka introduced results from a new project aiming to monitor wetlands in the Asia-Pacific region, using information obtained from NOAA AVHRR images. Used in combination with LANDSAT TM or MOS MESSR images, these data could provide information on the distribution of vegetation on a broad scale. Further plans to extend the analysis to a global scale were also presented.

9. Satellite tracking of migratory birds

Dr H. Higuchi, Director of the Research Centre of the Wild Bird Society of Japan, presented the results of a study to track the migratory flight of several species of crane and swan by satellite. In a cooperative project carried out by the Wild Bird Society of Japan, the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, the International Crane Foundation in the United States, and several nature reserves in Russia, Common Cranes *Grus grus*, Hooded Cranes *G. monacha* and White-naped Cranes *G. vipio*, and Whistling Swans *Cygnus columbianus* and Whooper Swans *C. cygnus* were fitted with transmitters that were then tracked by NOAA satellite. Detailed information was obtained regarding the migration routes taken, the time required, the separation of young from their parents, as well as important wintering, stopover and breeding sites for the birds. Applications of this data facilitated the creation of habitat management plans for the cranes and swans along their flight paths in Asia.

There being no further interventions or questions, the Chairman thanked the speakers and participants, and declared this item of the agenda closed.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Ninth Session: 16 June 1993, 0900 - 1400

Chairman: Prof T. Satoo (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr L. Mason (USA), Mr J. Méndez Arocha (Venezuela)

Secretariat: Mr D. Navid (Secretary General), Mr M. Smart (Assistant Secretary General)

Rapporteurs: Mr T.A. Jones, Ms C.M. Samuel

Agenda item XII (cont.): Report of Credentials Committee

Opening the session, the Chairman invited the Chairman of the Credentials Committee to present his report (document CRED. C.5.1). Presenting this document, the Chairman of the Committee added that credentials from Malta had been received after distribution of the written report. He thanked the Committee for its hard work and drew attention to the need for more detailed criteria on admission of letters of accreditation at future meetings.

Agenda item XIII (cont.): Reports of Workshops

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman from USA then took the chair; he invited comments on the revised report of Workshop D, document W.G. C.5.4 (Rev. 1). This report was adopted by consensus without further amendment.

Agenda item XVI (cont.): Adoption of Conference Report and Decisions

The Vice-Chairman then referred participants to document PLEN. C.5.5, the draft report of the Fifth Plenary Session. He asked for comments or amendments from the floor; there being none, the report was adopted by consensus. The Vice-Chairman then turned to document PLEN. C.5.6 and invited participants to comment on the draft report of the Sixth Plenary Session. This report was also adopted by consensus, subject to the inclusion of written amendments already submitted to the Secretariat by the delegation of Austria. The Vice-Chairman noted that the summary reports of the Seventh and Eighth Plenary Sessions ('Japan Day'), documents PLEN. C.5.7 and C.5.8, and of the present Ninth Plenary Session, document PLEN. C.5.9, would be circulated subsequently to participants by post.

The Vice-Chairman next read the so-called 'Daft Recommendation', a light-hearted document concocted by the interpreters and secretariat, which presented a faithful reflection of the friendly spirit of the Kushiro Conference.

He then invited the Assistant Secretary General to introduce the package of draft Resolutions and Recommendations which had been revised to take account of comments made in the Sixth Plenary Session. After discussion of each draft Resolution and Recommendation the following decisions were taken:

- Resolution RES. C.5.1 The Kushiro Statement and the Framework for the Implementation of the Convention. This Resolution was adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Resolution RES. C.5.2 Financial and Budgetary Matters. This draft Resolution was discussed in association with document DOC. C.5.13 (Rev. 2), which had been amended by the Conference Administrative Committee to take account of concerns raised in the Sixth Plenary Session. At the invitation of the Vice-Chairman, the Chairman of the Administrative Committee reported that changes had been made to paragraph 11 of Resolution RES. C.5.2 in order to reflect the call of the delegation of New Zealand for the development of Bureau business plans. Within the budget itself, the Contingency Fund budget line (number 10) had been reduced by 50% to fund a new line (number 8 d) providing financial support for the proposed Scientific and Technical Review Panel. Finally, the footnotes to the budget had been amended to reflect better the non-mandatory nature of voluntary contributions. The Vice-Chairman thanked the

Administrative Committee for its work and opened the floor for discussion.

The delegation of Germany reported that Germany could not agree to such a substantial budget increase, noting that it might set a precedent for other international treaties. However, Germany would look carefully at what might be done to overcome difficulties and, in the spirit of international cooperation, would not stand in the way of consensus.

The delegations of Argentina, Chile, France and Ireland also expressed concern regarding the level of increase. A written statement of concern was submitted by the delegation of Mexico.

The delegation of Brazil was able to give its consensus to the budget but did not accept that any precedent had been set. The latter observation was endorsed by the Vice-Chairman.

While expressing concern with the level of increase, the delegation of the UK signalled its willingness to accept the budget by consensus. The UK had been particularly pleased to see the amendments made to paragraph 11 of Resolution RES. C.5.2.

There being no other comments, the Resolution was adopted by consensus.

- Resolution RES. C.5.3 Procedure for Initial Designation of Sites for the List of wetlands of international importance (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.2). This Resolution and its Annex were adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Resolution RES. C.5.4 Record of Ramsar Sites where Changes in Ecological Character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur (Montreux Record) (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.3). The Resolution was adopted by consensus following clarification by the Assistant Secretary General of document INF. C.5.32 which had also been circulated to participants. He explained that the wetlands mentioned in document INF. C.5.32 would be the subject of consultations between the Bureau and the Contracting Party concerned and that adoption of the Resolution did not necessarily imply inclusion of the sites mentioned in document INF. C.5.32 in the Montreux Record.

The delegation of Bolivia indicated its support for inclusion of Laguna Colorada in the Montreux Record.

- Resolution RES. C.5.5 Establishment of a Scientific and Technical Review Panel (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.5). The Vice-Chairman invited the delegation of Belgium, as Chairman of the ad hoc drafting group which had reviewed the draft Resolution since the Sixth Plenary Session, to report on amendments made. The delegation of Belgium thanked all those who had participated in the drafting group and proposed one final addition, namely a paragraph indicating that IUCN and IWRB would be permanent observers on the Panel. After some discussion it was agreed that IUCN and IWRB should become observers, but that the word 'permanent' was not necessary.

It was also agreed that the Panel should be constituted of seven members representing each of the Ramsar regions and covering a range of appropriate disciplines. With these amendments, the Resolution was adopted by consensus.

In reply to questions from the delegations of Hungary and Pakistan, the Secretary General stated that nominations for the Panel should be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae and suggested that these should be submitted to the Bureau by 1 September 1993. The Bureau would be happy to draw up a specification for suitable candidates, but this might not be available for some time and Contracting Parties were encouraged to begin consideration of potential Panel members immediately.

- Resolution RES. C.5.6 Wise Use of Wetlands (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.6). This draft resolution had been amended following discussion by some members of the Wise Use Working Group and members of other delegations. The delegations of France and The Netherlands tabled four minor amendments and with these the Resolution was adopted by consensus.
- Resolution RES. C.5.7 Management Planning for Ramsar Sites and other Wetlands (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.8). The Assistant Secretary General referred to the reformulation of the second operative paragraph, which indicated that copies of management plans should be submitted to the Bureau only where specially appropriate. This reformulation was approved and the Resolution was then adopted by consensus.
- Resolution RES. C.5.8 Future Funding and Operation of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Fund (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.12). The Assistant Secretary General noted some small amendments which had been made to reflect fully contributions to the Fund received from Germany and Japan.

Professor Yugo Ono, the observer from the Nature Conservation Society of Hokkaido, speaking on behalf of all Japanese NGOs, expressed his thanks to all those concerned with the Conference, and especially for the hospitality shown by the City of Kushiro. He noted with pleasure that the Government of Japan had made a strong statement of support for the Convention, especially with regard to maintaining the ecological character of its Listed sites. Japanese NGOs could think of no better way of expressing their thanks than by contributing one million yen to the Wetland Conservation Fund. To the applause of the Conference, Professor Ono then presented a cheque for this sum to the Secretary General.

Subject to the inclusion of a reference to this generous donation by Japanese NGOs and of a minor amendment proposed by the delegation of Argentina, this resolution was adopted by consensus.

- Resolution RES. C.5.9 Application of the Ramsar Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.14). The Assistant Secretary General noted a few minor changes which had been made since the Sixth Plenary Session; the Resolution was then adopted by consensus.

Moving on to consideration of Conference Recommendations, the Assistant Secretary General, at the invitation of the Vice-Chairman, reported that although there had not been time to review draft Recommendations in the Sixth Plenary Session, a number of written comments had been received on the circulated drafts. The draft recommendations had been amended in the light of these comments, and seven draft recommendations, not previously reviewed in Plenary Session but based on interventions in previous plenary sessions and workshops, were now submitted for consideration: on wetlands as fish habitat, on the 25th anniversary campaign, on the new Headquarters in Switzerland, on thanks to the Japanese hosts, on the Neotropical Region, on MedWet and on Conference languages.

- Recommendation REC. C.5.1 Ramsar Sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties. This Recommendation, together with associated recommendations 5.1.1 to 5.1.3, was adopted by consensus subject to the inclusion of amendments proposed by the delegations of Greece, Hungary and Venezuela, and the observer delegation of Turkey. In relation to the eleventh operative paragraph of Recommendation REC. C.5.1, on the effects of the Statoil pipeline on the German Ramsar site of Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer mit Dollart, the delegation of Norway expressed its conviction that the Statoil pipeline would have no adverse effects on the ecological character of this site.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.2 Guidelines for Interpretation of Article 3 'Ecological Character' and 'Change in Ecological Character' (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.4). It was noted that a few adjustments were needed to the Spanish text. The Recommendation was then adopted by consensus.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.3 Essential Character of Wetlands and the Need for Zonation Related to Wetland Reserves (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.7). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus, subject to the removal of slight inconsistencies in the French version.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.4 Relationship between the Ramsar Convention and the Global Environment Facility and the Biodiversity Convention (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.10). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.5 Inclusion of Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands in Multilateral and Bilateral Development Cooperation Programmes (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.11). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus, subject to the inclusion of a new operative paragraph proposed by the delegation of Hungary covering support for wetland conservation in countries whose economy was in transition.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.6 The Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Ramsar Convention (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.15). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus, subject to the inclusion of minor amendments requested by the delegation of the Netherlands, which recalled that this Recommendation had arisen from the Pan-European Regional Meeting at Lelystad in 1992. The Secretary General referred to the strong support received from NGOs and was delighted to announce a contribution from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK) of UK£3,500 to the Monitoring Procedure. This was greeted with applause

by the participants.

- Recommendation REC. C.5.7 National Committees (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.16). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus subject to the inclusion of minor amendments proposed by the delegation of the UK, which also drew attention to the very useful discussions on the subject of National Committees which had been held at an informal meeting some days earlier.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.8 Measures to Promote Public Awareness of Wetland Values in Wetland Reserves (formerly numbered draft Recommendation REC. 5.9). The Recommendation was adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.9 Establishment of Ramsar Guidelines on Wetlands of International Importance as Fish Habitat. The Recommendation was adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.10 25th Anniversary Wetland Campaign for 1996. The delegation of Hungary recalled that 1995 had been designated by the Council of Europe as Nature Conservation Year, and cautioned that it might prove difficult to support two major campaigns in successive years. The observer from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (UK), in his capacity as Coordinator of IWRB's Education and Public Awareness Research Group, offered to assist the Standing Committee in preparing for the 25th Anniversary Campaign. The Recommendation was then adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.11 New Bureau Headquarters in Switzerland. The Recommendation was adopted by consensus without amendment, and the delegation of Switzerland expressed its gratitude to the Conference. Switzerland would continue to do its utmost to support the Convention and this Recommendation would be a great encouragement to all levels of the Swiss authorities.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.12 Thanks to the Japanese Hosts. The delegation of Japan expressed its pleasure at the proposal of this recommendation and thanked all of the overseas' participants for their kind words. It suggested that appreciation be expressed for the enormous contribution made by volunteers, which had been vital to the success of the Conference. The Recommendation was adopted by consensus with this amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.13 Promotion and Strengthening of the Neotropical Region. Following discussion it was decided that the final operative paragraph should be amended to include references to Agenda 21 and relevant international treaties. The Recommendation was then adopted by consensus without amendment.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.14 Collaboration for Mediterranean Wetlands. The Recommendation was adopted by consensus subject to the inclusion of minor amendments proposed by the observer delegation of Cyprus and the observers from ADAME and WWF.
- Recommendation REC. C.5.15 Working Languages of the Conferences of the

Contracting Parties. The Secretary General welcomed this recommendation but reminded the Conference of the need to consider the financial and practical implications of adding a further working language to those already used. At present there was no allocation in the core budget to support the use of Arabic. The Recommendation was adopted by consensus subject to inclusion of a request to the Standing Committee to consider the financial and other implications of adopting additional languages. Thereafter, careful consideration would be given to the proposals made, in conjunction with the host government of the next meeting of the Conference.

The Conference authorized the Convention Bureau to make any necessary editorial changes in preparing the published version of the Conference report and decisions.

Agenda item XVII: Election of Members of the Standing Committee

The Vice-Chairman invited proposals for membership of the new Standing Committee. The following nominations were made (alphabetically by region).

<u>Regional Representative</u>	<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Seconder</u>
<u>Africa:</u> Kenya Uganda	Tunisia	
<u>Asia:</u> India Nepal Bangladesh		
<u>Eastern Europe:</u>	Hungary Poland	Czech Republic
<u>Neotropics:</u>	Uruguay Venezuela	Chile
<u>North America:</u>	Canada Mexico	USA
<u>Oceania:</u>	New Zealand Australia	Papua New Guinea
<u>Western Europe:</u>	Spain Netherlands	Switzerland

<u>Alternate Representative</u>	<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Seconder</u>
<u>Africa:</u> Senegal	Algeria Mauritania	
<u>Asia:</u> Jordan Pakistan	Japan	
<u>Eastern Europe:</u>	Russian Federation	Bulgaria Romania
<u>Neotropics:</u>	Panama Venezuela	Costa Rica
<u>North America:</u>	Mexico USA	Canada
<u>Oceania:</u>	Papua New Guinea	New Zealand Australia
<u>Western Europe:</u>	Germany	Netherlands Switzerland

Having determined that there were no further nominations, the Vice-Chairman asked participants to indicate their acceptance of these proposals. There being no objections, the nominees for Regional Representatives and Alternate Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee were duly elected by consensus. The Vice-Chairman noted that the host of the present and next meetings of the Conference were ex officio members of the Standing Committee, and that Switzerland and UK had permanent observer status as host countries of the Bureau's offices; he also recalled that IUCN and IWRB had observer status. The Secretary General requested that the new Standing Committee should meet shortly after the closure of the Conference in order to elect its officers and set the date for the next meeting.

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

The Vice-Chairman invited proposals for the venue of the next meeting and the delegation of Australia asked for the floor.

The delegation of Australia announced that the Australian Prime Minister had authorized the issuing of an invitation to the Conference to meet in Australia in 1996. Australia being a federal state, it was intended to ask each Australian state to consider what contribution it could make to the organization of the meeting. The precise venue would be announced when responses had been received. The delegation of Australia then presented a series of slides illustrating the variety of Australian wetlands. Following this presentation, Australia's invitation to host the next meeting of the Conference in 1996 was accepted by acclamation.

Agenda item XIX: Any Other Business

There being no other business forthcoming from the floor, the Chairman resumed the chair for discussion of the final agenda item.

Agenda item XX: Closure of the Meeting

The Chairman invited the Mayor of Kushiro, the Secretary General and the Parliamentary Vice-Minister of the Environment Agency to make closing remarks.

Mayor Wanibuchi congratulated everyone connected with the meeting for their hard work in contributing to the achievement of many successful outcomes. He paid particular tribute to the citizens of the Kushiro area for their diligence and enthusiasm in ensuring the smooth running of the conference. Many hundreds of volunteers had worked very long hours, not only during the meeting itself but also in the preceding three years. Unfortunately, the weather had been beyond control, but hopefully this would not have discouraged participants from returning to Kushiro in the future, when they would be assured of a warm welcome. In conclusion, Mayor Wanibuchi reported that local sales of items promoting the Convention and the Kushiro Conference had raised a substantial sum of money and that he was delighted to present a cheque for 3,412,900 yen (almost SFr 45,000) to the Secretary General. The Mayor's announcement was greeted with acclaim by the Conference.

The Secretary General thanked Mayor Wanibuchi for making this impressive donation and expressed his conviction that the Kushiro Conference had marked a significant step forward for the Convention. It had been the largest ever meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, with more than 1,200 participants, and had stimulated interest in Japan, elsewhere in the Asian region, and throughout the world. A number of important and bold decisions had been taken, allowing the Convention to move forward, despite the difficulties being experienced by some countries. Venturing to speak in Japanese, the Secretary General recorded his deep appreciation of the efforts made by the hosts of the meeting: the Government of Japan, the Government of Hokkaido, and the City of Kushiro. Special thanks were due to the 2,000 volunteers who had worked so hard in order to ensure the success of the meeting. The Secretary General continued by thanking Conference staff, notably the Assistant Secretary General, Mr Michael Smart, who had been responsible for the technical programme of the meeting. Several of the Bureau's partner organizations, notably the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), la Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), had provided staff time free of charge. Thanks were also due to the translation and interpretation teams and other external staff who had been contracted specially for the meeting.

The Chairman, Professor Satoo, felt convinced that the Kushiro Conference would be seen as an historic turning point for the Ramsar Convention. Many extremely important decisions had been made and the number of Contracting Parties and listed sites looked set to continue growing. He recalled that 1996 would mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention, thus providing an important opportunity for building upon the successes of the present meeting. He thanked everyone who had been involved with making the Conference such a success, echoing the words of the previous speakers in giving particular recognition to the role played by the people of Kushiro and surrounding municipalities.

Turning to the formal closure of the meeting, the Chairman invited the Parliamentary Vice-Minister of the Environment Agency, Mr Kei Ohma, to address the Conference on behalf of the Government of Japan. Mr Ohma expressed the Government of Japan's sincere appreciation of the efforts made by all those concerned with the Conference. Awareness of the importance of wetlands was increasing at all levels and decisions had been made by the meeting with regard to conservation of listed sites, wise use, establishment of wetland reserves and international cooperation. The meeting had been especially valuable in raising public awareness, through wide television and newspaper coverage. The Government of Japan was determined to increase its efforts in the field of wetland conservation and reaffirmed its dedication to the Convention. Kushiro was the first city in Asia to have hosted a meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and it had been an honour for Japan to be recognized in this way. Thanks were due to the Ramsar Bureau and to the people of Kushiro for their hard work in making the meeting a success. In conclusion, the Vice-Minister expressed the hope that all overseas participants would enjoy the remainder of their time in Japan and have a comfortable journey home.

In response to the Parliamentary Vice-Minister's words, the delegations of Argentina, Kenya, India, Pakistan and the Russian Federation expressed their sincere thanks for the overwhelming generosity and hospitality shown by the government and people of Japan, especially the people of Kushiro.

There being no further business, the Chairman then declared the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties closed.