

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Standing Committee
Montreux, Switzerland
4 July 1990

Present:

Africa:

Alternate Representative: Kenya (P Chabeda) (part of the meeting)

Asia:

Pakistan (A Rao) (Vice-Chairman)

Eastern Europe:

Poland (K Dobrowolski, Z Krzeminski)

Neotropics:

Venezuela (M Quero, G Medina-Cuervo)

Alternate Representative: Uruguay (F Gonzalez Guyer)

North America:

USA (J Turner (Chairman), L Mason, M Willis)

Oceania:

Australia (B Phillips)

Alternate Representative: New Zealand (J Owen)

Western Europe:

Netherlands (R Wolters)

Alternate Representative: Spain (J M de Benito, C Morillo)

Host of last Conference:

Switzerland (A Antonietti)

Host of next Conference:

Japan (K Kikuchi, M Komoda, T Kondo)

Contracting Party Observers:

Norway (S Eldoy)

United Kingdom (R Bone, M Ford)

Permanent Observers:

IUCN (P Dugan)

IWRB (M Moser, J Patterson)

Secretariat:

D Navid (Secretary General)

M Smart (Conservation Coordinator)

T Jones (Technical Officer)

C Samuel (Administrative Assistant)

Agenda item 1: Welcome and Explanation of the Functioning of the Standing Committee

The Secretary General declared the meeting open at 14h00 hours and extended a particular welcome to new members of the Standing Committee. He noted that several important tasks had to be carried out during the present meeting, notably the election of Standing Committee

Officers, the planning of future Standing Committee activities, and the date and venue of the next meeting. He also noted that pursuant to previous procedure, the Bureau would send diplomatic notes to all member States of the Standing Committee to receive confirmation of the individual national representatives on the Committee.

Agenda item 2: Election of Standing Committee Officers

Referring to the Rules of Procedure, the Secretary General noted that the Standing Committee was required to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Paying tribute to the extremely valuable contributions made by Pakistan (out-going Chairman) and Canada (out-going Vice-Chairman), he invited nominations for the former position.

The delegation of Poland nominated the USA for the position of Chairman, a proposal which was seconded by the delegation of Pakistan and approved by consensus.

The delegation of the USA took the Chair and invited nominations for the post of Vice-Chairman.

The delegation of Japan nominated Pakistan for the position of Vice-Chairman, recalling Pakistan's role as Chairman of the Standing Committee during the last triennium. This proposal was seconded by the delegation of the USA and approved by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Review of Standing Committee Work Arising from the Montreux Conference

At the Chairman's request, the Secretary General introduced the document entitled "Standing Committee's Future Tasks", which had been prepared by the Bureau and distributed at the beginning of the meeting.

The Standing Committee reviewed each of the subjects included in the paper, which was a compilation of references to the work of the Standing Committee made during the course of the Montreux Conference.

(a) Database: wetland datasheet and wetland typology (cf REC C.4.7):

The representative of the USA noted that the USA would be providing written comments on the wetland datasheet and typology.

(b) Wetland Restoration and Sea Level Rise (cf REC C.4.14):

The Director of IWRB noted that, in cooperation with the Swedish authorities, IWRB was involved in wetland restoration at Lake Hornborga.

The representative of IUCN noted that IUCN was in the process of carrying out a series of studies regarding the effects of sea-level rise, and stressed the importance of developing a regional approach to such matters.

The Standing Committee agreed that the Bureau should act as a clearinghouse for such information and for the present did not think that the preparation of a manual as suggested in REC C.4.14 would be required.

(c) Wetland Conservation Fund (cf RES C.4.3):

Following some discussion, it was agreed that the Secretary General should investigate the operation of funds similar to the new Wetland Conservation Fund; the experience of the World Heritage Convention and CITES might be especially valuable. A paper should be provided by the Bureau for the next meeting of the Standing Committee. The observer from the UK also suggested that the Bureau should circulate a diplomatic note to all Contracting Parties, as soon as possible, in order to solicit voluntary contributions to the Fund. This was agreed by the Standing Committee.

It was agreed that the Convention needed to draw up guidelines for the operation of the Fund, notably with respect to the distribution of funds. It was also considered to be particularly important for the Standing Committee to discuss the question of what would constitute a “developing country” eligible to request support from the fund. After further consideration, it was decided that the representatives of Asia, North America and Oceania would undertake a review of this latter matter, before the end of September, in readiness for the Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee.

(d) Scientific Committee (cf REC C.4.7):

Dr D Langslow, one of the observers from the UK, had unfortunately been unable to attend the meeting, but had forwarded a discussion paper with regard to the possible formation of a Scientific Committee. This was read out by Mr Bone. The Secretary General noted that the formation of such a group was indeed welcome, but pointed out that it would have financial and operational implications. The observer of IUCN suggested that the creation of “task forces” to undertake specific activities might be the most effective method of addressing the issue. The Standing Committee agreed to consider this matter further in the future.

(e) Regional Ramsar Groups (cf Standing Committee Resolution):

The move towards greater regional activity, which had been evident at the Montreux Conference, was welcomed by the Standing Committee and it was agreed that there was a need to encourage further this development. In addition, the Standing Committee would consider in the future the names and composition of the seven Ramsar regions, in the light of the many suggestions for change which had been made.

(f) Reconstitution of the Working Group on Criteria and Wise Use (cf REC C.4.10):

At the suggestion of the Chairman, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to reconstitute the Working Group and to invite Norway to continue to provide a Chairman. The observer from Norway expressed willingness to accept this task. The composition of the Working Group was discussed and it was agreed that the following Contracting Parties should be invited to participate:

Africa: Mauritania

Asia: Jordan

Eastern Europe: Hungary

Neotropics: Chile

North America: USA

Oceania: Australia

Western Europe: Norway

The representatives of USA, Australia and Norway indicated their willingness to continue their membership of the Working Group. The Bureau was requested to contact the other proposed members to request their acceptance.

The Chairman expressed gratitude for the excellent achievements of the Working Group, under the Chairmanship of Norway, during its first three years.

(g) Other Matters:

The paper "Standing Committee's Future Tasks" also included: oversight of the Monitoring Procedure (cf REC C.4.7); demarcation of Ramsar site boundaries (cf WG C.4.2); and proposed change of Convention's title (cf PLEN C.4.6).

It was agreed that the Monitoring Procedure must continue to be an important element of work under the Convention and that the Standing Committee would maintain close contact with the Bureau on this point. As the question of demarcation of sites was raised by Denmark, the Bureau was asked to work with the Danish government in producing a paper on this issue. Finally, the Standing Committee requested the Bureau to examine the implications of a change in the name of the Convention, and report back to the Standing Committee.

The Secretary General noted that particular attention also needed to be given in future meetings of the Standing Committee to the request from the final day's plenary session for a greater emphasis on mangroves, coral reefs and other coastal ecosystems; as well as arrangements for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Japan in 1993. This was agreed.

The representative of the USA and the observer from IUCN urged that the Convention should place a strong emphasis on the role of Multilateral Development Banks in Wetland Conservation (cf REC C.4.13). It was agreed that this was an important area for future discussion by the Standing Committee.

(h) Personnel Matters:

The Secretary General noted that it had been agreed previously that the Standing Committee should be involved in annual staff evaluation. However, it was further noted by the alternative representative of New Zealand that the Standing Committee could not and should not be involved with the details of personnel matters. These, it was agreed, were to be dealt with by the Secretary General in consultation with the Director General of IUCN.

Agenda item 4: Next Meeting of the Committee:

It was decided that the Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee should take place at Slimbridge, by kind invitation of IWRB, on 15-17 October 1990. It was also agreed that official invitations should be conveyed to those Contracting Parties which had been elected as alternate Regional Representatives.

Agenda item 5: Any Other Business:

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked the participants, indicated that he was

looking forward to an exciting triennium of work and declared the meeting closed at 15h30 hours.