

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee
Slimbridge, United Kingdom
15-17 October 1990

Proceedings

PRESENT

Members:

Africa: Tunisia (S. Kacem)

Asia: Pakistan (A.L. Rao, Vice Chairman)

Eastern Europe: Poland (Z. Krzeminski), Hungary, Alternate Representative (F. Markus)

Neotropics: Venezuela (D. Rodriguez)

North America: United States of America (J. Turner, Chairman, L. Mason, T. Dahl, M. Willis)

Oceania: Australia (T. Richmond)

Western Europe: Netherlands (F. von der Assen), Spain, Alternate Representative (C. Morillo)

Host of last Conference: Switzerland (A. Antonietti)

Host of next Conference: Japan (T. Kondo, Y. Natori)

Permanent Observers

United Kingdom: (R. Bone, M. Ford)

IWRB: (M Moser, C.M. Finlayson)

IUCN: (M. Holdgate, P. Dugan)

Contracting Party Observers

Austria: (E. Zanini)

France: (M. Jouve, H. Lethier)

Mexico: (G. de la Garza)

Invited NGO Observers

WCMC: (J. Harrison)

WWF: (S. Lyster)

WWF: (B. Bertram, D. Hulyer)

Secretariat

D. Navid (Secretary General)

M. Smart (Conservation Coordinator)

M. Katz (Administrator)

J. Tucker (Staff member from January 1991)

T. Jones (IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer) Rapporteur

M. Bernhard (Multilingual Secretary)

Agenda item 1: Opening and Welcoming Remarks

The Chairman opened proceedings at 10:15hrs and welcomed members and observers to Slimbridge and to the Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee. He thanked The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), and the Ramsar Bureau for hosting and organizing the meeting which was being held in very appropriate and impressive surroundings. He then invited the Director of IWRB to say a few words of welcome.

The Director of IWRB welcomed participants on behalf of IWRB and The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and explained the relationships between the various Slimbridge-based organizations. He referred to the decisions taken at Montreux which would be resulting soon in the transfer to Gland of Michael Smart, the Ramsar Bureau's Conservation Coordinator, and expressed a personal debt of gratitude to Mr Smart for his support and close cooperation. However, despite the administrative changes, formal links between IWRB and the Ramsar Bureau would continue through work on the database, other technical support activities and general partnership projects.

The Director General of IUCN had been unable to attend the opening of the meeting owing to other urgent business, but was to join the meeting later. At the Chairman's invitation, the IUCN Wetlands Coordinator welcomed participants on behalf of IUCN.

Welcoming participants on behalf of the Ramsar Bureau, the Secretary General expressed his thanks for the support and assistance of IWRB during preparations for the meeting. He recalled that the Standing Committee had major responsibilities in guiding the work of the Bureau and in guiding the Contracting Parties in their implementation of the Convention. A general framework had been established at Montreux, but now was the time to determine specific details of such matters as finances, Working Groups, and the Wetland Conservation Fund. It was also time to begin considering the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, to be held in Kushiro, Japan in 1993.

The Director General of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust said that his organization was honoured to welcome participants to Slimbridge. He outlined briefly the history and aims of the Trust and expressed the hope that all participants would take the opportunity to explore and enjoy the facilities at their disposal.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

At the Chairman's invitation, the draft agenda was adopted without substantive amendment, although it was agreed that the order of agenda items would be altered slightly in order that the Director General of IUCN might participate in discussions of particular relevance to his organization. (For ease of reference, these proceedings follow the original order of agenda items).

Agenda item 3: Admission of Observers

The Chairman asked the Secretary General to outline the procedure for admission of observers. Referring to page 5 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, the Secretary General stated that Contracting Parties were entitled to take part in meetings of the Standing Committee as observers.

Other observers, if admitted, were welcome to take part in meetings of the Standing Committee, with the exception of executive sessions. He noted that Contracting Party observers were represented at the present meeting by Austria, France, Mexico and United Kingdom, and that IUCN and IWRB were present as permanent observer organizations (as the hosts of the Ramsar Bureau in Switzerland and the UK respectively). In line with past practice, the Bureau had also invited observers from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), and The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), all of whom were present.

The Chairman expressed his support for the continuation of previously accepted procedures and the Standing Committee indicated its approval for the admittance of the observers detailed above.

Agenda item 4: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Seventh and Eighth Meetings of the Standing Committee Not Otherwise Covered by the Agenda

The Chairman asked the Secretary General to introduce the Minutes of the previous two meetings of the Standing Committee, which had been circulated prior to the present meeting via official Bureau notification.

The Secretary General explained that owing to the very heavy workload at Montreux, rather concise minutes had been produced for the Seventh and Eighth meetings of the Standing Committee. Nevertheless, the Bureau had endeavoured to ensure that the minutes recorded accurately the deliberations of the Standing Committee. Three sets of comments had been received by the Bureau, and the draft minutes would be amended accordingly. Most importantly, the draft minutes of the Eighth Meeting had not mentioned that Kushiro in Japan had been formally approved as the venue for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, and that the Japanese authorities would be liaising with the Bureau to finalize details of dates and other matters.

Following the Chairman's request for further comments on the draft minutes, the representative of Tunisia noted that he had been absent from the Standing Committee meetings at Montreux, but wished to record his approval of the restructuring of the Standing Committee to allow for the participation of Alternate Regional Representatives. He was also pleased to note the establishment of the Wetland Conservation Fund and looked forward to discussing details of the Fund's operation.

In reply to a further point raised by the representative of Tunisia, the Secretary General stated that Diplomatic Notes requesting confirmation of the names of individuals representing the various Standing Committee members had been sent to all Contracting Parties concerned. The

Bureau would be delighted to send a reminder to the Tunisian authorities.

Further amendments to the draft minutes, involving points 3(b) and 3(g) on pages 16 and 18 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, were made in the light of comments by the observer from IUCN. In reply to a question from the representative of Pakistan, the Secretary General stated that Diplomatic Notes had been sent to all those Contracting Parties elected at Montreux to serve on the Wise Use working Group. To date, responses had been received from about three quarters of the Parties contacted.

There being no further comments, the Chairman noted the Standing Committee's approval of the draft minutes, subject to inclusion of the amendments raised during the present meeting.

Agenda item 5: Presentation of Report on 1990 Activities by the Convention Bureau

The Chairman recorded his appreciation for the work undertaken during the year by the Bureau staff, especially in connection with the Montreux Conference. It was particularly commendable that the first volume of Montreux Proceedings had already been produced along with a Newsletter issue reporting on the Conference. The Chairman then asked the Secretary General to take the floor to present the Bureau's report for 1990.

Referring to pages 19-28 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, the Secretary General reviewed the current status of the Convention noting that there were now 60 Contracting Parties (following the accession of Ecuador in September). Only eight Parties had yet to accept the Paris Protocol, although it was understood that Austria, Belgium and USSR were all in the process of acceptance. 13 Parties had accepted the Regina amendments and a major diplomatic effort would be made in the next few months to gain the further eight acceptances required for the amendments to enter into force. The List of Wetlands of International Importance now contained more than 500 sites and documentation for additional designations foreshadowed at Montreux (e.g. by France and Switzerland) was expected in the near future. Significant progress had been made with conservation activities, and the Bureau's conservation team would be strengthened in the next triennium by the addition of Technical Officers working on the issues of Wise Use and Listed Sites.

The Conservation Coordinator reviewed the important decisions taken at Montreux, including approval of the wetland datasheet and classification of wetland type; approval of the revised criteria; approval of the Monitoring Procedure, and approval for maintaining a record of Ramsar sites where a change in ecological character had occurred or was likely to occur.

The Secretary General continued by outlining some of the Bureau's work in promotional activities; work with partner organizations, and financial management, and noted that the Bureau would be producing a full Annual Report as usual. He concluded by thanking the Bureau staff for their efforts in preparing for the present meeting, which had involved a significant workload in addition to Montreux follow-up.

The representative of the Netherlands expressed his appreciation for the Bureau's work and wished to record his thanks to IWRB for hosting the Standing Committee.

The representative of Pakistan emphasized that Contracting Parties should, if possible, supply information on Listed sites in the datasheet format approved at Montreux. He noted that some Contracting Parties lacked the necessary staff for completing the datasheets, and would need some support.

The representative of Japan recalled that the Japanese authorities had undertaken to pay contributions for the triennium 1988-1990 before the end of the present fiscal year (i.e. May 31 1991). However, it had been decided that in order to facilitate the work of the Convention, payment would be made at an earlier date. The representative of Japan was delighted to announce that the necessary procedures had now been completed and that the Bureau should receive payment before the end of the week.

The announcement by the representative of Japan was greeted with appreciation by the other members of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 6: Review of Convention Finances

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary General introduced this agenda item, referring to pages 29-58 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation and to three additional papers which had just been circulated by Bureau staff in order to provide an up-to-date financial overview. These covered:

- core income and expenditure (to 11 October 1990)
- project income and expenditure (to 11 October 1990)
- summary of contributions received from Contracting Parties (to 11 October 1990)

He noted that there were seven separate sub-headings for consideration:

- (a) 1990
- (b) 1990 expenditure
- (c) 1991 income projections
- (d) 1991 priorities for expenditure
- (e) Auditors' Reports 1988-89
- (f) Establishment of Capital Fund
- (g) Establishment of Wetland Conservation Fund

(a) 1990 income

(i) core income

The year had started with a technical deficit because, in line with accounting procedures, 1989 contributions not received until early 1990 had to be credited as 1990 income. Core income received so far in 1990 amounted to SFr515,544. A few Contracting Parties had yet to pay their 1990 contributions and the Bureau looked forward to receiving these payments in the near future.

(ii) project income

A document had been distributed to show income and expenditure for individual projects. The Secretary General expressed his great appreciation to the many Contracting Parties and organizations which had supported Convention projects during 1990, paying particular tribute to Switzerland for its magnificent support of the Montreux Conference and to the many sources of funding for delegate travel which had enabled the participation of so many countries. A major contract from the government of the Netherlands, for work on developing the Wise Use work of the Convention, was enabling the Bureau to appoint a Wise Use Technical Officer who, it was hoped, would be in post by early 1991. Project income was urgently required for the Monitoring Procedure, which received only minimal support from the core budget.

(b) 1990 expenditure

(i) core expenditure

The invoices remitted to Contracting Parties had totaled SFr639,510 but the Bureau could not anticipate receipt of payment for every invoice sent out. In 1989, the Standing Committee had therefore set priorities for expenditure which could be undertaken according to the proportion of core income actually received. In fact, 1990 core expenditure so far was below the anticipated level. In terms of individual budget lines, “telecommunications” was over budget, but this stemmed from an unrealistic allocation at Regina for this aspect of Bureau operations. “Support to Delegates” was well under budget owing to the receipt of generous project income. The “miscellaneous” heading showed, for accounting purposes, an exchange rate loss of SFr26,895 on the annual contribution received from the United States of America. A healthy surplus was anticipated by the end of the year, provided that expected income was received on time. The announcement that receipt of the Japanese contribution was imminent had been especially welcome in this respect.

(ii) project expenditure (See also project income, above)

A presentation was made on the status of each of the Convention projects. The “Newsletter” had been redesigned and would continue to be produced, though as cheaply as possible, from core funds, until a new source of project support could be found. The Secretary General also outlined expenditure on projects run from Slimbridge, including the Tunisian wetland inventory, the database and Ramsar video. The video had been an expensive item, but was already proving its worth as a promotional and educational tool. It was being sold for a minimal amount to cover reproduction and mailing costs.

During discussion of 1990 income and expenditure, the representative of the USA indicated that he would investigate the possibility of the USA making an additional 1990 contribution of about SFr 15,000. The Bureau was to be congratulated on the manner in which it had displayed details of the Convention finances, and the wide range of countries and organizations which had supported Convention projects was most impressive.

The representative of Tunisia assured the Standing Committee that the procedure for payment of Tunisia’s annual contribution to the core budget for 1989 and 1990 was in progress. He added

his thanks to donors of funding for delegate travel and emphasized the importance of this type of support for developing countries. He congratulated the Bureau on the production of the Ramsar video but noted that developing countries were likely to experience difficulties in paying for copies. Finally, he welcomed the Wise Use project and urged all Contracting Parties to support its development.

The Secretary General stated that it was not the Bureau's practice or intention to profit from sales of the video. It was expected and understood that developing countries would often have difficulties in paying for such items.

The representative of France indicated that payment of the French annual contribution (the fourth largest contribution) to the core budget for 1990 would be made soon.

In reply to a question from the representative of the USA, the Secretary General indicated that the Conservation Coordinator was liaising with the German authorities to clarify the position with regard to the unpaid contributions of the former German Democratic Republic. Following a telephone conversation with the German authorities, the Conservation Coordinator informed the meeting that outstanding dues from the former German Democratic Republic would not be paid. However, increased dues for Germany would be paid from 1991-1993. Recent contacts with the Soviet authorities had indicated that the necessary procedures for acceptance of the Paris Protocol and Regina Amendments were now underway and that annual financial contributions to the core budget would begin in the triennium 1991-93. The Conservation Coordinator would be visiting the Soviet Union in November 1990.

(c) 1991 income projections

The Secretary General recalled that the Montreux Conference had adopted a substantially increased triennial budget and he urged all Contracting Parties to assist the Bureau in meeting the new budget. He presented the new simplified invoice format for 1991, which was directly comparable with the budget by indicating the sum payable in Swiss Francs. Each invoice would also include details of the amounts invoiced to each Contracting Party, together with a request for additional support - notably for the Wetland Conservation Fund. Some invoices would be prepared separately to take into account special circumstances, for example, in the cases of Contracting Parties which had made regular additional payments in the past. The Secretary General circulated examples for inspection and the 1991 invoices were duly approved by the Standing Committee.

(d) 1991 priorities for expenditure

Referring to page 37 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, the Secretary General reviewed the 12 prioritized expenditure headings for 1991. The greatest expenditure would again be on staff costs but as was acknowledged at Montreux the six staff envisaged by the core budget would be insufficient to cope with the Bureau workplan and hence would have to be augmented by staff supported through projects.

It was agreed that the Secretary General should work with the Chairman to determine total staff costs in 1991 due to several uncertain items at present, including the transfer of the Conservation Coordinator to Gland, new staff gradings, and completion of contracts with new staff.

Following an explanation from the Secretary General, the Standing Committee gave its approval for the transfer of SFr5,000 from the contingency fund to priority no.4, "Data and Information". This revision had been requested by the Director of IWRB and would enable IWRB to carry out the full range of support activities which had been envisaged at Montreux.

In reply to questions raised by the representative of Tunisia, the Secretary General stated that the Conservation Coordinator would be moving to Gland as soon as personal circumstances allowed. He also noted that the Bureau and IWRB would be working together to elaborate a workplan for "Scientific Work by IWRB" under priority 3. No funding was available at present for "Other Scientific Work" (priority 10) but allocations could be envisaged in the future.

There being no further comments or questions, the Chairman requested approval of the 1991 priorities for expenditure. The Standing Committee indicated its approval by consensus.

(e) Auditors' Reports for 1988 and 89

The Standing Committee examined the Auditors' Reports for 1988 and 1989 which appeared on pages 41-53 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation. There were no comments or questions arising.

(f) Establishment of "Capital" Fund

The Secretary General suggested that in light of discussions at Montreux, any further payments for 1988 or 1989 received in 1990 might be used to establish a reserve fund. This would provide the Bureau with an important source of security to enable sound planning of expenditure.

The representative of the USA considered that the Standing Committee needed to examine two questions; firstly, whether or not to approve the establishment of such a fund, and secondly what guidelines to give to the Secretary General in authorizing him to draw from that fund. The USA considered that the fund should be a reserve to be retained at a relatively stable level from year to year. Such a system would simplify the work of the Bureau and would allow modest ad hoc expenditure to be made.

The representative of Pakistan endorsed the points raised by the representative of the USA, and suggested that drawing upon the capital fund should be guided by the budget set by the Contracting Parties.

The observer from the United Kingdom pointed out that the new fund, if established, could guarantee the operation of the Convention at the beginning of each year, without the Bureau having to make major changes in reaction to slow payment of annual contributions by the Contracting Parties.

Following lengthy and detailed discussion, it was agreed that a guarantee fund, to be known as the Reserve Account, should be established, that it would fulfill a different role from the contingency fund which was a budget line item (and therefore subject to budgetary changes), and that it would be desirable for “floor” and “ceiling” levels to be established for the new fund. It was also agreed that the Reserve Account should allow the Bureau to operate for as long as possible without other income; a floor figure of SFr100,000 was therefore approved as the target level for the fund, subject to the size of the end-of-year surplus. The Secretary General indicated that such a sum would cover Bureau salary costs for approximately two months. Finally, it was agreed that as long as the floor limit of the fund was respected the Secretary General should be authorized to draw upon the Reserve Account for the purchase of essential computer hardware and other equipment required as a result of increased staffing levels for 1991, and for the production of promotional items.

(g) Establishment of Wetland Conservation Fund

The Secretary General noted that the administration of the Fund was covered by a separate agenda item (see item 9), but that the Committee’s guidance was requested on the establishment of accounting mechanisms for the Fund. IUCN’s Finance Service had advised operation of the Fund as a separate project within Ramsar accounts.

The representative of the Netherlands felt that all Western European countries would agree that the Wetland Conservation Fund could make an important contribution to the wise use and conservation of wetlands, especially in developing countries. It would serve as a clear demonstration of the advantages of joining Ramsar. The Netherlands was therefore delighted to announce that it would be making an annual contribution to the Fund of SFr10,000 during the next triennium.

The observer from the UK was also pleased to announce that the UK would be contributing £5000 per year during the next triennium. In reply to his question, he was reassured by the Secretary General that any interest generated by this sum would be recredited to the Wetland Conservation Fund.

The Standing Committee expressed its appreciation of the two most welcome announcements from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The representative of Hungary stressed the importance of considering the application of the fund to Eastern Europe.

In reply to a question raised by the observer from the United Kingdom, the Secretary General assured the Standing Committee that contributions to the Fund would be sought from a wide variety of sources, but that the Fund would benefit from being established by the Contracting Parties.

Following further discussion, the Standing Committee indicated its approval for the proposal to operate the Wetland Conservation Fund as a separate project within the Ramsar accounts and agreed to return to more detailed considerations under agenda item 9.

Agenda item 7: Review of Administrative Matters

This agenda item was covered during a closed session of the Standing Committee. A report of the closed session has been prepared separately for distribution to the participants involved.

Agenda item 8: Standing Committee Operations

The Chairman introduced the agenda item noting that there were two separate issues for discussion, relating to the establishment of sub-groups and the role of Alternate Regional Representatives, respectively.

(a) Establishment of Sub-Groups

The representative of the USA warned against setting up an array of permanent sub-groups. It would be more efficient and more effective to maintain a flexible approach by setting up ad hoc sub-groups. The Secretary General felt that Standing Committee meetings, by their very nature, allowed insufficient time for adequate discussion of certain issues and he considered that ad hoc sub-groups could serve a useful function.

The observer from IUCN suggested that the Bureau programme should be reviewed every three years, but it was important that persons independent of the Ramsar Bureau be invited to carry out this task. With regard to the establishment of sub-groups, the observer from IUCN had once been in favour of setting up task forces but there now seemed to be a need for a broader technical review process than was provided by the Wise Use Committee. For example, there was no clear mechanism for reviewing work on the Monitoring Procedure or on the database. There was a need to avoid a proliferation of sub-groups and it might therefore be appropriate for the Wise Use Committee to evolve into a full Technical Committee.

The representative of Switzerland emphasized the importance of working within existing structures. Sub-groups should be short-lived and specific. This view was endorsed by the representative of Tunisia.

(b) Role of Alternate Regional Representatives

The representative of Tunisia emphasized that there was a need for clarification of the part to be played by the Alternate Regional Representatives.

The Secretary General considered that the decision to establish Alternate Representatives had been an excellent step forward in strengthening regional activities under the Convention.

Following general discussion, it was agreed that the Bureau should work closely with the Contracting Parties concerned to develop regional coordination of Ramsar activities. The representative of Australia noted that this should certainly involve promotion of contacts with non-Contracting Parties. The representative of the Netherlands suggested that regional workshops would be an effective mechanism for increasing the level of regional participation.

He hoped that the coming years would see ever closer cooperation and exchange of expertise between Eastern and Western Europe.

Agenda item 9: Montreux Conference Administrative Matters Follow-up

(a) Procedures for Administering the Wetland Conservation Fund

At the Chairman's request, the Secretary General outlined the present situation, recalling that the Standing Committee had asked the Bureau to formulate proposals for the operation of the Fund. He referred participants to background information contained in pages 71-75 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation. The Bureau had consulted with colleagues in other organizations and particularly detailed discussions had been held with Unesco, in relation to the fund operated under the World Heritage Convention. The Chairman suggested that discussion of administering the Wetland Conservation Fund might be subdivided as follows:

(i) Income to the Fund

- * identification of income sources
- * methods of pursuing contributions
- * "earmarked" income

(ii) Allocations

- * receiving projects
- * reviewing projects
- * capacity of Bureau
- * role of Standing Committee
- * role of partners
- * eligibility of a country to apply
- * using the term "developing country"

At Montreux, it had been decided to make an initial modest allocation to the Fund of SFr10,000 per year from the Convention's core income. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom had just pledged a total of about SFr22,500 per year and several other Contracting Parties had expressed their intention to make voluntary contributions, whilst WWF had offered to contribute SFr20,000 as soon as an equivalent amount had been pledged by the Contracting Parties.

However, whilst these early donations were very welcome and allowed the establishment of the Fund, a strategy was needed to increase greatly the level of funding available. A target might be set at two million US dollars per year (in line with the World Heritage Fund).

The observer from Austria indicated that the Austrian Provinces had agreed to contribute to the Fund and that it would be helpful to have a list of the types of project to be supported. It would be attractive to have a "one donor country, one project" system, so that the general public could see the impact of their country's contributions.

During general discussion, it was agreed that strictly earmarked contributions could complicate management of the Fund, but that this was no reason for avoiding earmarked income. The

corporate sector was much more likely to restrict funding by earmarking, and reporting back to donors would be a major task for the Bureau. The possibility of launching the Fund publicly by way of an international “pledging event” was considered unlikely to generate large sums of money.

The observer from WWF confirmed that, in line with his organization’s pledge at Montreux, SFr20,000 would be paid into the Fund immediately and that this amount would be unrestricted. WWF hoped that the Fifth meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties would be increasing greatly the level of core support for the Fund, which would be the best way to avoid earmarking problems. This view was endorsed by the representative of Switzerland.

With regard to the allocation of funds, the Secretary General suggested adopting the Unesco model, whereby money collected in year one was allocated in year two, following the scrutiny of projects by an advisory sub-committee and final decision by the full World Heritage Standing Committee.

Possible uses of the Fund were shown on pages 71-73 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, under five headings:

- (i) Preparatory assistance
- (ii) Emergency assistance
- (iii) Training
- (iv) Technical assistance
- (v) Assistance for promotional activities

The Secretary General stressed that the list was not intended to be hierarchical.

Lively discussion of the points raised by the Secretary General then ensued and, in the light of the complexity of the many issues involved, it was decided that a working group should be established in order to finalize the administration of the Wetland Conservation Fund. However, amongst the important points to emerge from the general discussion were:

- it was essential to avoid competing for funds with NGOs
- use of the Fund should not be limited only to existing Ramsar sites or to existing Contracting Parties, although extreme care would be needed to ensure that an appropriate balance was reached.
- emergency allocations might be authorized by the Chairman of the Standing Committee, but the full Committee should be consulted whenever practicable.
- “preparatory assistance” should also include work on the necessary legal procedures for Ramsar accession/site designations; this was of crucial importance to developing countries.
- production of a simple application form might facilitate operation of the Fund.
- it was important to maintain a flexible system in order to accommodate the differing priorities in different regions or countries.
- if the Fund was to take off, it was important to demonstrate effective allocation of resources at the earliest opportunity. It would be wise to compile an extensive portfolio of projects requiring support.

The Chairman appointed the following ad hoc working group to take the discussion further:

Main Group: Pakistan (Chair), Poland, Switzerland, Tunisia, United Kingdom

Observers: Australia, Austria, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, USA, UICN

The group held informal meetings during the present meeting of the Standing Committee and was requested to communicate written views to the Bureau within ten days; the Bureau would then circulate a compilation of the comments received. There would probably be informal discussion at Perth, followed, if necessary, by a meeting at Bureau headquarters in the spring.

(b) Change of Convention's Title

The Chairman asked the Secretary General to explain the background to this agenda item. The Secretary General recalled that the question of removing the words "especially as Waterfowl Habitat" had been raised at Montreux. He indicated that a formal change in the title raised major legal questions but that there was frequently a need for a shorter, less unwieldy title, for general use. He referred participants to pages 77-78 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation.

During discussion, the representative of Japan stated that his country had doubts over amending the Convention's title for everyday use, even if the official title was to remain unchanged. He asked the Bureau to consider the disadvantages of removing "especially as Waterfowl Habitat" to form a shorter working title.

The representatives of the Netherlands and Switzerland supported reducing the working title to "Convention on Wetlands" but the representative of Tunisia favoured "International Convention on Wetlands". The observer from the United Kingdom felt that there was undoubtedly a need for an abbreviated title, but considered that "Ramsar Convention" was an existing, and appropriate abbreviation. He doubted the need to look further. The observer from France referred to the comments of the representative of Japan and stressed that it was essential for the Convention to be seen to be broadening its approach to wetlands. This view was supported by the representative of Mexico. The representative of Pakistan felt that the name "Ramsar" was unfamiliar to large numbers of people and that the name "Ramsar Wetland Convention" should be used. The representative of Spain suggested that, for legal and procedural reasons, the full title of the Convention should always appear on official documents, but that "Ramsar Convention" should be used colloquially.

There being no clear consensus, it was agreed that the issue might be raised at the Kushiro Conference in 1993. Until then, the Bureau would continue its present practice of using the full Convention title on official documents and using an abbreviated version where appropriate.

Agenda item 10: Bureau Workplan for 1991

At the request of the Chairman, the Secretary General introduced the background papers for this

agenda item, pages 79-86 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation. He noted that each year, the Standing Committee had the responsibility of reviewing the Bureau's workplan, but that the workplan for 1991 was the first to be based on a triennial programme. The programme set out essential and desirable activities for inclusion in the annual workplan. Each member of the Bureau staff would be asked to set out their individual targets for 1991 as part of individual work programmes.

The representative of Australia called upon the Bureau to include reference to Oceania in a refined version of the workplan. He reminded participants of the requests made at Montreux for greater attention to be paid to the wetlands of the region.

The representative of Pakistan referred to priority 3.II.(a) on page 83 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation. He felt that Regional Representatives could play a major role in promoting the accession of new Contracting Parties, and he drew attention to the IWRB symposium being held in Pakistan in late 1991 which would have a regional focus. This also related to priority 1.IV. (a) on page 84. Referring to priority 1.I.(c) on page 83, he confirmed that Pakistan would soon be replacing 4 of its Ramsar Sites (which the Monitoring Procedure had identified as not meeting the Ramsar criteria) with 15 new sites, although some problems remained with map production, and the Bureau's help would be appreciated.

Agenda item 11: Conservation of Listed Wetlands

(a) Review of Ramsar List

The Chairman invited the Conservation Coordinator to introduce this agenda item. The Conservation Coordinator referred to the latest lists of Contracting Parties and sites designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, which had been distributed to participants. There were now 60 Contracting Parties, and 508 sites on the List. It was hoped that both totals would increase further before the end of 1990. He explained that from 1991, the List would be produced directly from the database at Slimbridge, but that close links would be retained with WCMC. He paid tribute to the work undertaken on behalf of the Convention by WCMC, and looked forward to continuing cooperation.

The IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer pointed out that more new wetlands had been added to the List in 1990 than in any year since 1976. Once site documentation was received from France, Switzerland and several other Contracting Parties which foreshadowed new designations at Montreux, 1990 could turn out to be a record year.

The Standing Committee examined the revised format which the List would be published in from 1991 and were invited to convey their comments to the IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer.

(b) Discussion on Monitoring Procedure

The Conservation Coordinator reviewed the Montreux discussion of the Monitoring Procedure and asked participants for any updates which they might have concerning individual Ramsar sites mentioned at Montreux, notably those listed in paragraph 224 of Montreux document INF

C.4.i8.

The representative of the USA informed the Standing Committee of the latest situation in the Everglades, Florida, subject of Montreux Recommendation Rec.C.4.9.2. The Federal Government was suing the State of Florida over alleged degradation of water quality and quantity.

The observer from Mexico described how Hurricane Gilbert had affected the ecology of the Ría Lagartos Ramsar site, and she went on to detail how the impact of the hurricane had forced different groups of people to work together so that a management plan had been established and the wetland was now being utilized sustainably.

The representative of Spain outlined the current status of the Ramsar sites at Doñana and Las Tablas de Daimiel. The situation at Daimiel was largely unchanged, with the regeneration plan proceeding as before. With regard to Doñana, the Montreux Recommendation (Rec.C.4.9.1) had been conveyed to the Spanish Authorities but the general situation remained largely as before, although the new government of the Autonomous Community of Andalucía included persons who had previously shown concern over Doñana.

The representative of Pakistan reminded participants that, as a result of the application of the Monitoring Procedure in Pakistan, 4 existing Ramsar sites would be removed from the List and replaced by 15 new sites. The Monitoring Procedure had confirmed that the four sites to be delisted, (all of which were designated prior to the existence of criteria and guidelines for site selection), were not of international importance, and should never have been included in the List.

The Conservation Coordinator asked whether the Bureau should be assessing all designated sites against the criteria and guidelines. The Secretary General recalled that CITES had made a review of its existing annexes when new criteria had been adopted. The general opinion of the Standing Committee was that this was a task for the Contracting Parties themselves. The representative of Pakistan reminded participants of the need for immediate compensation, should a Contracting Party decide to remove a wetland from the List. The IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer stated that a brief analysis of information available from the database suggested that the total number of Ramsar sites which might warrant review in this way was probably less than ten.

The observer from Austria referred to page 92 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation and asked how Austria should proceed in order to have “Donau-March-Auen” removed from this record. The Conservation Coordinator said that the Bureau had been instructed to maintain a two-tier record mentioning both Ramsar sites where change in ecological character was still likely, and those where remedial measures were under way. “Donau-March-Auen” were in the second category and could be removed as soon as the remedial measures were completed.

The representative of the Netherlands said that as a result of public concern over the future of “De Groote Peel” the Government of the Netherlands had commissioned independent research which found that the ecological character of the wetland was likely to be changed substantially by proposed agricultural developments. As a result, restrictions had been imposed to safeguard

the site and to control planning of the surrounding area. The hydrological and ecological situation at the site would therefore improve.

The observer from WWF said that his organization believed the Monitoring Procedure to be of great importance. WWF had been disappointed by the small allocation from core funding agreed at Montreux. Nevertheless, as soon as SFr20,000 were received in voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties, WWF would make an equivalent donation. Many Ramsar sites were experiencing considerable problems but it was important that the Monitoring Procedure's limited resources were not spread too thinly.

The Conservation Coordinator said that he fully shared the concerns expressed by the observer from WWF. Referring to his recent visit to apply the Monitoring Procedure at the Leybucht (FR Germany), the Conservation Coordinator stressed the impact which visits under the Monitoring Procedure could have in catalyzing action at a regional and local level. However, it was desirable that a more rigorous system for following-up on Monitoring Procedure work should be developed. The Bureau's capacity for strengthening the Monitoring Procedure would be facilitated greatly in the next triennium when two additional conservation staff would be in post.

The representative of Poland stated that the Polish authorities were preparing a dam project in order to help tackle the adverse effects of water extraction by the Soviet Union from the Oswinka River. This extraction had led to problems at the "Siedem Wysp" Ramsar site.

In reply to a question from the Conservation Coordinator, who referred to recent recommendations by IWRB, the observer from the United Kingdom stated that he had no direct information with regard to possible Ramsar Listing of Strangford Lough, Northern Ireland, but promised to raise the matter with the appropriate authorities. He also undertook to provide a map of the Abberton Ramsar site, whose boundaries had recently been -restricted.

Agenda item 12: Wise Use of Wetlands

The Secretary General introduced this agenda item, at the request of the Chairman, referring participants to page 93 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation. He said that the project was designed as a vehicle to inform the wider public about wise use of wetlands and that considerable discussion had already taken place, notably with Netherlands officials and IUCN. The project would highlight work on the development of national wetland policies as well as focus on specific site-based activities. It would not be simply a desk study, and it was intended that the officer employed to coordinate the project would interact fully with local people and partner organizations. The project would culminate in an expert meeting in the Netherlands in 1992 where presentations would be made, a major publication would be launched, and an action plan, including projects for funding by national development agencies, would be set out. The Wise Use Working Group would be an integral part of the project and there would be meeting of the Working Group in conjunction with the forthcoming IUCN General Assembly in Perth, Australia. All Contracting Parties were warmly invited to participate in the meeting.

The representative of Hungary confirmed that his country would be sending an observer to the Perth meeting.

The observer from IUCN pointed out that input to the project could be sought from other bodies such as FAO and that IUCN was preparing documents on mangrove management, tidal wetlands and tropical peatlands which would be of relevance.

The Standing Committee expressed strong appreciation for the project and thanks to the Netherlands for its support, with participants representing developing countries stressing the importance of promoting wise use in all aspects of the Convention's work.

Agenda item 13: Development Assistance Activities

The Chairman referred participants to page 94 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation and then gave the floor to Mr M. Willis, one of the representatives of the USA, who had prepared a paper which had been circulated to all participants. Mr Willis recalled Montreux Recommendation Rec.C.4.13 and described how Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) had been skeptical in the past about the need for environmental reviews of development projects and many problems had only come to light when it was too late. However, there had recently been a change in climate and most MDBs now accepted that such work was essential. Each MDB had a Board of Executive Directors who voted on each potential loan project, and it was at this level that Rec C.4.13 had largely been directed.

Mr Willis had laid out a series of personal suggestions at the end of his paper, which were divided into actions to be undertaken by the Bureau, and actions to be undertaken by the Standing Committee.

The representative of Pakistan suggested that training courses should be established by MDBs, especially for the Asian Development Bank, in order to provide an insight into environmental impacts of development projects. He emphasized that environmental projects were often given a low priority by development aid administrators.

The representative of Australia congratulated Mr Willis on producing a thought-provoking paper and felt that it would be very appropriate to hold a workshop on the subject of development assistance at the Kushiro Conference in 1993.

The observer from Mexico highlighted the problems experienced by developing countries. She pointed out that the necessary environmental impact assessments were not paid for by MDBs, but had to be financed by the environmental protection agency of the country seeking funds. She stressed the advantages of having such assessments carried out by local experts whenever practicable. The terms of reference of projects affecting ecosystems were often not strict enough. The Ramsar Bureau should tackle these problems with the development banks.

The representative of Venezuela said her country's experience was somewhat different from Mexico's in that Environmental Impact Assessments were often financed as an integral part of projects. However, she stressed the great expense of such assessments.

The Secretary General stressed that the Bureau had only limited staff capacity to carry out this

aspect of its workplan. The Conservation Coordinator asked participants to provide the Bureau with appropriate contacts within specific MDBs. The representative of the USA and the observer from IUCN offered assistance with providing contacts. The observer from WWF congratulated Mr Willis on an excellent paper. If it was felt that more could be done, WWF might be able to assist with funding, perhaps jointly with Contracting Parties.

The observer from IUCN emphasized how important and crucial this issue was. He suggested that the Wetland Conservation Fund could serve as a catalyst for attracting MDB investment in environmental projects. He emphasized the importance of the decision by the US Treasury to adopt voting standards for MDB-funded projects.

The discussion concluded with general agreement that the role of MDBs should be a focus of the Kushiro Conference.

Agenda item 14: Review of Convention Projects

The Secretary General drew the attention of participants to pages 97-102 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, which included brief progress reports on each of the principal Convention projects. He thanked all those Contracting Parties, partner organizations and other bodies who had contributed to the various projects listed but stressed that, despite the establishment of the Wetland Conservation Fund, the Bureau would continue to require project support.

In reply to a question raised by the representative of Pakistan, the representative of Japan stated that his country wanted to take advantage of the Kushiro Conference in order to encourage the accession of new Contracting Parties in Asia and to become further involved in supporting relevant wetland conservation projects.

Agenda item 15: Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

(a) Presentation by Japanese delegation

At the Chairman's invitation the representative of Japan reported on the preliminary arrangements for the Kushiro Conference in 1993, including the establishment of a national preparatory Committee. The dates had yet to be finalized. Standing Committee participants were asked to notify the Bureau of any meetings around that time, so that potential conflicts could be avoided. The representative of Japan was delighted to announce that Japan would be providing a two-year staff secondment to the Ramsar Bureau to assist with preparations for the Conference. The CV of the chosen candidate would be sent to the Bureau as soon as possible.

The Secretary General expressed his pleasure that arrangements for the Conference were so well in hand and noted that he and the Administration [Administrator] looked forward to visiting Tokyo and Kushiro in December for discussions with the Japanese authorities about requirements for the Conference.

(b) Discussion on "Lessons Learned" at Montreux Conference

The Secretary General drew the attention of participants to pages 103-110 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, which had been prepared in order to help avoid recurrence of some of the difficulties which had cropped up even at the very well organized Montreux Conference. A lengthy document had been prepared for the Swiss authorities to assist them in the preparations for Montreux; a similar manual would be compiled for the Japanese authorities.

The Secretary General went on to highlight some of the problems which needed to be avoided in Kushiro:

- * some delegate travel to Montreux had been pre-paid on request to the Bureau, but had never been used or refunded to the Bureau
- * the procedure for the submission of proposals/draft recommendations needed tightening up; some difficulties had arisen at Montreux owing to the late submission of major proposals
- * very few completed national reports had been received by the deadline for submission. This had made it impossible for the Bureau to complete important conference documentation on time.

The Secretary General also stressed the enormous workload involved in producing the proceedings of each Conference. Although volume 1 of the Montreux Proceedings had already been published, a further two volumes (Workshop reports, and National Reports) were in preparation. The Swiss authorities had been extremely generous in their support, but a review of the scope and cost of Proceedings would be helpful for planning the Kushiro Conference.

With regard to the locations of Conferences of the Parties, the Secretary General noted that unless a Conference budget line could be established at some time in the future, it would be difficult for Conferences to be held outside the richer Contracting Parties. This was worrying since the Bureau recognized the desirability of having a Conference in a developing country.

The Chairman asked participants to consider all of the points raised by the Secretary General and to convey their comments to the Bureau.

Agenda item 16: Promotional Activities

The Chairman gave the floor to the Administrator.

Referring to page 111 (English version) of the Standing Committee documentation, the Administrator reported that use of the Convention logo had been most successful, with a number of promotional items having been produced in connection with the Montreux Conference. She then reported on specific promotional activities.

(a) Logo Registration

No further news had been received from the World Intellectual Property Organization, with whom the Bureau was attempting to register the Convention logo.

(b) Newsletter

A two-page newsletter had just been produced and illustrated the new design which had been created by the Bureau's designer. A new system would be needed for printing the newsletter during the next triennium and quotations had been solicited from two firms in Switzerland and one in the United Kingdom. The newsletter would be produced on A4 paper, contain 8 pages and be published three times per year. The inner four pages would focus on specific issues of relevance to wetland conservation.

It was the general opinion of participants that, in view of the lesser costs involved, the newsletter should be printed on a trial basis by Severnprint Ltd in the United Kingdom.

The observer from the United Kingdom stressed the importance of using recycled paper for the newsletter.

The importance of using the full name of the Convention on the newsletter was stressed by the representative from Japan.

(c) Video/Slide Show requests

The video and Slide show had proven to be great successes and the Bureau had received many requests for copies.

The representative of Australia hoped that any videos produced by the Bureau in future would feature Oceanian wetlands. The Secretary General replied that the video had been prepared in a great hurry for Montreux and that it was hoped to produce an even better video for Kushiro, which would certainly include reference to the Oceanian region.

(d) Information Packs including "Programme Profiles"

A folder had been produced to contain information and promotional literature about the Convention. It was envisaged that a series of short "programme profiles" would be produced to provide informative summaries of the main aspects of the Convention's work. An example "programme profile", dealing with the database, was circulated to participants, together with a sample information pack.

(e) Site Diplomas/Plaques

The diplomas had been well received and had attracted a great deal of interest.

The Spanish-speaking participants pointed-out that use of the word "diploma" was inappropriate in Spanish, since the word held connotations in that language concerning approval and oversight; "certificate" would be far more acceptable. It was agreed that this problem would be rectified quickly by producing "certificados" for use in Spanish speaking countries.

(f) Marketing of Convention Items

The Administrator circulated examples of possible designs for Convention ties and scarves. About SFr17-20,000 would be required for the production of 500 of each item but it was hoped that the ties and scarves would prove as popular as the T-shirts and watches at Montreux. The Secretary General emphasized that the marketing of Convention items was not intended primarily as a fund-raising exercise, but as part of a general out-reach effort. The Standing Committee expressed its approval for the work which had been undertaken to date, agreed with the production of ties and scarves as well as additional T-Shirts and watches, subject to available funds, but stressed the need for proceeding with caution in this field.

(g) Other Promotional Activities

The Secretary General noted that the Bureau had a great need for photographic material from Listed sites for use in promotional material and he appealed for contributions from participants.

Agenda item 17: New Convention Publications

(a) Montreux Conference Proceedings

It was noted that this subject had already been covered under other agenda items, but participants were reminded that there were two further volumes to be produced, in addition to volume 1, (containing official conference papers and decisions), which had just been published.

(b) History of the Convention

The Chairman introduced Professor Geoffrey Matthews, former Honorary Director of IWRB, whom the Bureau had approached to write a short history of the Ramsar Convention, together with Professor Luc Hoffmann, also a former Honorary Director of IWRB.

Professor Matthews presented his suggestions for the outline of such a publication and provided an opportunity for Standing Committee members to make comments or suggestions. The Standing Committee signaled its approval of the project, which, it was agreed, would provide an invaluable reference source for existing Contracting Parties and partner organizations, but, perhaps more importantly, would assist potential new Parties to obtain a fuller picture of the purpose and evolution of the Convention.

(c) Legal Analysis of the development of the Convention

The Secretary General informed participants that a reference document was being prepared by Cyrille de Klemm, the Bureau's legal adviser. This was welcomed by the Committee on the understanding that the text would be submitted to the Standing Committee for review prior to publication.

Agenda item 18: Database Demonstration

At the invitation of the Chairman, the IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer presented a brief review of

the current status of the Ramsar database project. The database was now firmly established, but would require significant time and resources for the foreseeable future. Coding of dBASE IV files had been completed for all 508 Ramsar Sites, and some basic analyses of these data had been undertaken, the results of which were distributed to the Standing Committee in the form of a short paper. Owing to the large number of participants in the meeting, it had proved impossible to arrange for an “on-screen” demonstration of the database, but participants were invited to visit the database office if they were interested in learning more about the project.

A paper was also received from IUCN’s Environmental Law Centre, outlining steps being taken to collect information about the legal status of Ramsar sites and the general legal situation for wetland conservation in Contracting Parties. This was welcomed by the participants, although it was noted that external funding would have to be found to develop such work further.

Agenda item 19: Next Meeting of the Standing Committee

The Chairman opened the floor to suggestions and participants greeted with approval and appreciation an invitation from the representative of the USA for the Standing Committee to hold its 1991 meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida in the week beginning November 3rd.

Agenda item 20: Any Other Business

No items of further business were raised.

Agenda item 21: Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked all participants for contributing to a most successful and useful three days and duly closed the meeting.