

Twelfth Meeting of the Standing Committee
 Kushiro City, Hokkaido, Japan
 8 June 1993

Minutes

PRESENT:

Members:		
Africa:	Alternate Representative: Kenya (S. Njuguna)	
Asia:	Pakistan: (A. Jan - Vice-Chairman)	
Eastern Europe:	Poland: (Z. Krzeminski)	Alternate Representative: Hungary (L. Lakos)
Neotropics:	Venezuela: (J. Méndez Arocha)	
North America:	USA (D. Smith - Chairman; L. Mason)	Alternate Representative: Canada (J. McCuaig; J. Kostash; C. Rubec)
Oceania:	Australia (B. Phillips)	Alternate Representative: New Zealand (J. Owen)
Western Europe:	Netherlands (A. Van der Zande)	Alternate Representative: Spain (J.M. de Benito; C. Morillo)
Host of Next Conference:	Japan (K. Kikuchi; M. Komoda; Y. Natori; M. Sakurai; T. Satoo)	Japan - Observer (T. Wanibuchi; N. Saito)
Host of Last Conference:	Switzerland (A. Antonietti)	
Permanent Observers:	UK (H. Neal, M. Ford)	
	IUCN (M. Holdgate; J.-Y. Pirot)	
	IWRB (M. Moser, D. Parish, D. Wells)	
Contracting Party Observer:	Germany (C. Paulus)	
Invited Observer:	WWF (S. Lyster)	
Secretariat:	Secretary General (D. Navid)	
	Assistant Secretary General (M. Smart)	
	Director of Conservation (H. Lethier)	
	Administrator (J. Tucker)	
	Communications Officer (M. Katz)	
	Administrative Assistant (K. Hills-Peppler)	
	IWRB/Ramsar Liaison Officer (T. Jones - Rapporteur)	

	Conference Secretariat (C. Samuel - Rapporteur)	
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1. **Opening and Welcoming Remarks:** The Chairman formally opened the meeting and invited participants to introduce themselves. At the Chairman's invitation, the Secretary General made a few welcoming remarks, noting that the meeting provided an important opportunity for the Standing Committee to make a final review of arrangements for the forthcoming Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

2. **Adoption of Agenda:** The Chairman ruled that Agenda Item 5 would be discussed at the end of the meeting in a closed session of the Standing Committee. This change was agreed upon and the Agenda was adopted without further modification.

3. **Admission of Observers:** Pursuant to Rules 3 and 4 of the Rules of Procedure for the Standing Committee, the Chairman invited the meeting to admit the observer from Germany, the permanent observers from IUCN and IWRB, and the invited observer from WWF. No objections were raised and all the observers were formally admitted to the meeting.

4. **Administrative Matters:** At the invitation of the Chairman, the representative from the USA introduced this Agenda Item. He reported on a meeting held in January 1993 between IUCN (the Director General and the Wetlands Programme) and a subgroup of the Standing Committee (Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK). This meeting had been arranged at the request of the Eleventh Meeting of the Standing Committee at which it had been decided to review relations between IUCN and the Ramsar Bureau, particularly with respect to financial and administrative matters. The January meeting had concluded with the Director General of IUCN the delegation of primary responsibility for personnel, finance, and office maintenance to the Secretary General of the Ramsar Bureau; an agreement to this effect had been signed by IUCN's Director General and the Secretary General. The subgroup of the Standing Committee felt that this had been a significant step forward and he thanked IUCN for the very positive and supportive approach which they had brought to the discussions. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director General of IUCN stated that he had been very pleased with the outcome of these discussions; it was particularly satisfactory that Ramsar's relationship with IUCN was now clearly defined and he looked forward to concentrating on more technical aspects of wetland conservation in the future. IUCN's Council had fully endorsed the Agreement signed by IUCN and the Ramsar Bureau.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr T. Wanibuchi, Mayor of the City of Kushiro, presented words of welcome to the Standing Committee, expressing the honour which the City of Kushiro felt in hosting the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. He recalled his first meeting with the Secretary General five years previously at which he had been struck by the Convention's emphasis on the concept of Wise Use. He had immediately realized the applicability of Wise Use to Kushiro Marsh and since that time had worked to raise awareness of wetland conservation both locally and more widely in Japan and the Asian region. Preparations for the Conference had been extensive and the Mayor expressed his sincere hope that participants would find the meeting facilities adequate.

The Mayor's speech was greeted by warm applause. In reply the Chairman congratulated the Mayor for the impressive work which he and the people of Kushiro had put in to making the Conference possible and providing such excellent facilities.

5. **Review of Convention Finances:** this item was covered by a closed session of the Standing Committee.

6. **Wetland Conservation Fund:** At the invitation of the Chairman, the observer from the UK introduced a document which had been prepared in order to address issues raised at the Eleventh Standing Committee Meeting with regard to operation of the Wetland Conservation Fund (henceforth referred to as *the Fund*). The document had been drawn up by the observer from the UK with the assistance of the representative from Australia and the Chairman of the Standing Committee (USA). The Chairman asked the meeting to review the document in detail and after extensive discussion the following conclusions were reached:

- there should be no substantive revision of Montreux Resolution C.4.3;
- the deadline for receipt of applications for allocations from the Fund should be brought forward to 1 June annually;
- consideration of applications for emergency assistance should be restricted to situations where there is an immediate and unforeseen threat to a site included in the List;
- allocations from the Fund made by the Standing Committee at its annual meeting should bear in mind the need to retain a minimum amount sufficient for addressing emergency applications received later in the year;
- high priority should be given to applications relating to the implementation of recommendations arising from the application of the Monitoring Procedure;
- a report providing adequate feedback on actions undertaken with the assistance of the Fund should be a requirement; the Guidelines for Operation of the Fund should be amended to reflect this. Failure to report should render the applicant ineligible for future assistance. In the case of 'Preparatory Assistance' to a country seeking accession to the Convention, a proportion of the funds allocated should be retained by the Bureau pending receipt by the Standing Committee of a report on the actions undertaken;
- an applicant Contracting Party or supporting organization should not be permitted to participate in the discussion of projects relating to its own region.

Other recommendations contained in the paper distributed by the UK were not agreed upon and the UK was asked to redraft paragraphs 4.5, 5.2, and 5.3. The latter two paragraphs related to the means of appraisal of applications by the Bureau and its partner organizations, especially IUCN and IWRB. Representatives of both these organizations expressed their willingness, in principle, to assist the Convention in technical evaluation of Wetland Conservation Fund applications, but stressed the need to examine in detail the financial and administrative implications of this work.

At the Chairman's request, the Bureau undertook to enter into discussion with partner organizations to formulate a proposed mechanism by which technical appraisal could be carried out. The conclusions of these discussions would be brought to the attention of the Standing Committee as soon as possible.

7. **Kushiro Conference Matters:**

a) **Priority Issues at the Conference:** At the request of the Chairman, the Assistant Secretary General summarized the principal technical matters to be discussed during the forthcoming Conference. He noted that there were now 75 Contracting Parties, while the Convention would enter into force in the near future for Brazil and Papua New Guinea. The Regina Amendments were still not in force and efforts would be made at the Conference to secure further acceptances.

The List of Wetlands of International Importance stood at 610 sites covering some 38 million hectares. Among the site-related issues for discussion would be: review of the existing List to ensure sites meet the criteria; procedure for future designation; the Montreux Record; the Monitoring Procedure; and the Database, Classification of Wetland Type, and Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands.

Other important themes would be: discussion of results from the three-year project on Wise Use funded by the Government of the Netherlands (e.g. further guidance on Wise Use), National Ramsar Committees, the Wetland Conservation Fund, and additional projects funded by individual Contracting Parties (e.g. by France and the USA).

The four technical Workshops (A: Listed Sites, B: Wise Use, C: Wetland Reserves, D: International Co-operation) would provide an opportunity for Conference participants to debate all these issues in detail. The Assistant Secretary General continued by listing the recommendations expected to result from each Workshop, as contained in the Conference documentation. He noted that broader consideration needed to be given to the role of the Convention. Should it exist primarily to establish international norms and standards for wetland conservation and to facilitate application of these standards? Or should the Convention place much more emphasis on raising funds for wetland conservation efforts to be implemented by the Parties? The Conference would also be considering the establishment of a scientific or technical committee and drafting of a Kushiro Statement to set out the Convention's response to the challenges set by the UNCED Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

In response to comments made by the representative from Hungary, the Secretary General agreed that it was extremely disappointing that many Contracting Parties had failed to submit national reports. The Bureau would endeavour to update the Review of National Reports (DOC C.5.16) to include late submissions, but this would prove extremely difficult since so many reports had arrived long after the existing six-month deadline.

He also agreed that it would be difficult for the Conference to adopt finalized guidelines for interpreting 'change in ecological character', although it was likely that a decision could be taken on the need for further work in this area.

b) Schedule of Events: The Standing Committee reviewed the schedule of events for the Conference. In reply to a question raised by the representative from Australia, the Secretary General said that the Conference Agenda had highlighted formal agenda items. However efforts would be made to publicize other activities and the environmental theatre presentation 'Odyssey of the Waderbirds' would be considered part of the official programme.

c) Conference Registration and Conference Officers and Committees: The Secretary General reported that 1400 pre-Conference registrations had been received by the Bureau, including 900 Japanese participants and 500 participants from outside Japan. He recalled that Professor Satoo had been nominated as Chairman by the Government of Japan, but nominations were sought for two Vice-Chairmen and a Credentials Committee, the latter to be composed of about five members, as at previous meetings. The Bureau tentatively proposed the USA, Chairman of the Standing Committee, and Venezuela, Regional Representative for the Neotropics, to be Vice-Chairmen, and both Contracting Parties signalled their willingness to accept such a nomination. At the request of the Chairman, the

Standing Committee agreed that these nominations should go forward to the Conference.

The Secretary General continued by noting that, as in the past, the Bureau would attempt to ensure that the Credentials Committee reflected both geographical and linguistic balances, though it would be important to include the host Government and at least one member with a legal background. The Standing Committee authorized the Bureau to make the necessary preparations for election of the Credentials Committee on this basis.

d) **Organizational Policy Matters:** A document detailing 'Guidelines for the Press' was distributed by the Bureau for consideration by the Standing Committee. These guidelines, aimed at ensuring the smooth running of the meeting, while providing optimum opportunities for media coverage, were duly adopted.

National non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with written approval from the Government of the country in which they were located, would be permitted to participate in the Conference, subject to receipt of a US\$ 200 registration fee. This would entitle each NGO delegation to receive one set of documentation, with additional sets available for a supplementary payment of US\$ 100 per set. Money received in this way would be used to help offset Conference costs arising from the participation of such a large number of NGOs, but any surplus would be put into the Wetland Conservation Fund. NGOs from developing countries were entitled to apply for a waiver exempting them from payment of a registration fee.

To date three NGOs had applied for a waiver and the Secretary General asked for the Standing Committee's guidance in deciding whether a waiver should be granted in these particular cases. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Standing Committee approved the granting of fee waivers for NGOs from Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago, but requested further information in the case of a request received through the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

e) **Heading for Conference Decisions:** The Secretary General recalled that Montreux Workshop B had requested clarification of the distinction between Conference Recommendations and Resolutions. The Standing Committee agreed with the view of the observer from IUCN that Resolutions applied to decisions taken by the Contracting Parties themselves with regard to the internal functioning of the Convention, while Recommendations usually related to the outward implementation of the Convention by one or more Contracting Party and could sometimes be addressed to non-Contracting Parties.

f) **Other Matters:** The Chairman invited comments on further issues relating to the forthcoming Conference. The delegation of Japan stressed the importance of encouraging the development of nature conservation policies and welcomed the participation of NGOs in the Conference. Japan attached great importance to the need for considering future implementation of recommendations made at the meeting. It would also be important to determine during the meeting the precise relationship between the Ramsar Convention and the Biodiversity Convention. The Conference would also need to examine means of increasing the number of Contracting Parties.

In response to an additional point raised by the delegation of Japan, the Secretary General stated that Conference document DOC C.5.16 (Review of National Reports) had been produced from an analysis of national reports together with other material available to the Bureau. He apologized if any inaccurate or inappropriate information concerning Japan

had been included in the review and he undertook to meet with representatives of the Government of Japan to address this question in detail. However as a general point, he recalled that many Contracting Parties had not submitted national reports and that it was sometimes necessary to make use of other sources of information in order to present a complete picture of activities under the Convention.

The observer from Germany stated that the Government of Germany wished to strengthen its wetland conservation efforts. The Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development had recently agreed to offer support for wetland protection within the framework of Germany's bilateral co-operation programme. This information had been conveyed to the Convention Bureau and it was hoped that all Contracting Parties would be duly informed. Germany was also in the process of establishing a National Ramsar Committee and was also undertaking work on wetland management planning and monitoring. Germany was prepared to join the Standing Committee in the coming triennium and would like to be considered as a nominee for the position of Alternate Representative for Western Europe.

8. **Next Meeting:** The Secretary General noted that the Standing Committee would be meeting under the umbrella of the Conference Committee throughout the coming week. A decision on arrangements for the first meeting of the new Standing Committee would be taken in due course once the new Committee was in place.

9. **Closing Remarks:** The Chairman closed the open session of the Standing Committee so that a closed session concerning Agenda Item 5 could take place.

Closed Session

The Standing Committee met in Closed Session to discuss Agenda Item 5: 'Review of Convention Finances'. The Director General of IUCN was invited to participate in this Closed Session as an observer.

5. **Review of Convention Finances:**

The Standing Committee was provided with up-to-date information on the Convention's financial situation. Expenditure was shown to be well in line with budgeted figures. However the Secretary General expressed some concern about core income. He explained that for the year 1992, two important national contributions had not been received (i.e. Italy and Russia) which had resulted in a shortfall of some SFR 166,000 in the Convention's finances. Consequently the Convention's cash reserves entering the year 1993 were half of those in the bank the previous year. Furthermore these same countries had not yet paid their 1993 contributions. The Secretary General pointed out that should the funds in question not be forthcoming in 1993, the Convention's total cash reserve would be depleted by the end of the year. However he informed the Standing Committee that assurances had been received from these two members that either payment had been made and was being traced (in the case of Italy) or would be soon forthcoming (in the case of Russia).

The Secretary General next reported on the healthy status of project funds maintained by the Convention. Nevertheless he noted that two projects, which affected two staff positions, would terminate during 1993. The Wise Use project was scheduled to be

completed at the end of June 1993 and the Kushiro secondment concluded at the end of September 1993, although an extension of the salary elements of that project had now been agreed with the donor until 31 December 1993. In order to retain the staff concerned throughout the year 1993, other project funding was required. The Secretary General expressed confidence that this could be arranged for the remainder of the year, but was doubtful about possibilities for the posts during the coming triennium, pending decision on the 1994-1996 budget.

The Standing Committee expressed concern about the current shortfall of core income and noted that clarification would be sought during the Kushiro Conference from the countries concerned. Because of this situation and that of project termination during 1993 which affected staff posts, the Secretary General was asked to report again at the autumn meeting of the Standing Committee, and to work as necessary with the Director General of IUCN to take any required steps with regard to staff contracts.

Attention next turned to the proposed budget for the period 1994-1996. Concern was expressed by some members of the Standing Committee about the proposal and it was agreed that it might be difficult for the Conference to consider the budget in detail during the time allocated for that agenda item in the Conference programme. It was therefore agreed that at his discretion, in view of the debate in the plenary session on 10 June, the Chairman of the Conference should propose the establishment of a Finance Committee to work further on the budgetary proposals and report back to a later session of the plenary.

(During the Kushiro Conference the Russian and Italian delegates reiterated the intention of their countries to pay their national contributions. On 4 August 1993 the 1992 national contribution from the Russian Federation of SFR 118,991 was subsequently received, and on 13 August 1993 Italy's 1992 and 1993 contributions were received in the amount of SFR 47,525 each year.)

Rapporteurs: Tim Jones, Christine Samuel