

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE  
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

Fifteenth Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee  
Budapest, Hungary: 10-14 October 1994

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Africa:Kenya (A. Koyo - Vice-Chair) Alternate: Senegal (A. Ndiaye)  
Asia:India (B.P. Singh) Alternate: Jordan (Y. Al-Zoubi)  
Eastern Europe:Hungary (L. Lakos - Chair, M. Véggh) Alternate: Russian Federation (S. Tveretinov)  
Neotropics:Uruguay (R. Cal Johnston) Alternate: Panama (K. Díaz de Melgarejo)  
North America:Canada (J. McCuaig) Mexico (M.A. Isidro - part of the meeting)  
Oceania:New Zealand (J. Owen) Alternate: Papua New Guinea (J. Genolagani)  
Western Europe:Spain (C. Morillo) Alternate: Germany (F. Dieterich)  
Host of Next Conference:Australia (B. Phillips)  
Host of Previous Conference:Japan (H. Sayama, K. Kawasaki)

Permanent Observers:

Switzerland (A. Antonietti)  
UK (G.C. Donald, M.J. Ford)  
IUCN (M.J. Cockerell, F. Nemeth, J.-Y. Pirot)  
IWRB (M.E. Moser, S. Frazier, M.D. Menon)

Contracting Party Observers:

Argentina (G.F. Lingua)  
Austria (E. Seltenhammer, R. Turk)  
Brazil (N. do Prado Dieguez)  
France (M. Bigan)  
Iran (S.A. Motallebi Pour)  
South Africa (P. Celliers)  
USA (L. Mason)

Invited NGO Observers:

BirdLife International (J. O'Sullivan)  
WWF (B. Gujja)

Secretariat:

Secretary General (D. Navid)  
Administrator (J. Tucker)  
Communications Officer (M. Katz)  
Senior Technical Officer (T. Jones)  
Technical Officer (S. Kobayashi)  
Programme Assistant (A. Pavlic)  
Executive Assistant (E. Luthi - Rapporteur)  
Secretary (A. De Giorgio)

Office Clerk (M. Riera)

## 1) Opening and Welcoming Remarks

Welcoming the participants to the Committee's 15th meeting, the Chairperson introduced Dr Katalin Szili, Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy, and Dr Janos Tardy, Deputy Secretary of State. Dr Szili addressed the meeting on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy. She referred to Hungary's long-standing commitment as a member of the Ramsar Convention and the influence of recent changes in ownership structure and institutional building. She noted the many issues and decisions tabled for debate, including strategic planning for the future of the Convention. Hoping that her country was able to provide the necessary facilities, she conveyed the Ministry's wishes of success to the participants, and thus declared the meeting open.

On behalf of the Convention Bureau, the Secretary General thanked the Government of Hungary for its generosity and acknowledged the dynamic role Hungary had played over the years in the field of conservation of nature and especially wetland conservation. The study tour to the Hortobágy National Park and Ramsar sites had given meeting participants an impressive insight into Hungarian wetland conservation and wise use efforts. The agenda of this mid-triennium meeting included items on improved short- and long-term planning (with special acknowledgement of the input by Canada), crucial questions on strategic planning, 25th anniversary activities, the future of the Wetland Conservation Fund, the Monitoring Procedure, work of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), many of the items featuring in the agenda of the Brisbane Conference. The Secretary General thanked meeting participants for their agreement to apply a new procedure at this meeting whereby documentation was primarily produced in English with translations of only the most critical papers and the provision of informal interpretation by staff.

Mr Michael Cockerell, IUCN's Assistant Director General for Management, greeted the meeting on behalf of the Director General who regrettably had not been able to attend. Mr Cockerell reported that IUCN, as the legal persona for Ramsar, provided support to the Convention through several IUCN bodies. Its Secretariat was presently undergoing an evaluation and restructuring process with a view to decentralizing and increasing support for its scientific and technical networks. The resulting increased efficiency was also expected to provide increased support to Contracting Parties. Mr Cockerell was pleased to introduce his colleagues, Messrs Jean-Yves Pirot, Head of the IUCN Wetlands Programme, and Ferenc Nemeth, Head of the IUCN Budapest Office.

Dr Michael Moser conveyed the greetings of the IWRB Executive Board, Wetlands for the Americas (WA), and the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), with which IWRB had been developing an active alliance. This being his third visit to Hungary in 1994, Dr Moser thanked the Government of Hungary on behalf of the NGOs for their warm welcome. He concluded by saying that administrative issues should not deter the meeting from addressing key technical issues.

The Chairperson completed the opening remarks by noting the importance of this meeting and the need for cooperation by all participants so that the full agenda might be handled in an efficient way.

## 2) Adoption of Agenda

The Chairperson proposed to defer Agenda Item 6 'Presentation of Reports by Regional Representatives' until after Agenda Item 9 'Review of Administration Matters'. A closed session would be held immediately after the lunch break of the same day to discuss Agenda Item 9 'Review of Administrative Matters'.

The Permanent Observer from the United Kingdom inquired about participation in the closed session. Making reference to past practice when Contracting Party observers had only participated in closed sessions upon specific invitation, the Chairperson doubted whether discussions could be held efficiently if the group became too large. However since the Rules of Procedure did not state that a Contracting Party which was not a member of the Standing Committee could not participate in the closed session, it was agreed that all Contracting Parties wishing to participate could attend, if they so desired

With these amendments in timing, the agenda was adopted by consensus.

### 3) Admission of Observers

The Chairperson welcomed the considerable number of observers from Contracting Parties and thanked them for their continued interest and commitment. In addition to the permanent NGO observers from IUCN and IWRB, she also welcomed BirdLife International and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Their attendance was approved by consensus.

### 4) Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Standing Committee not otherwise covered by this Agenda

The Secretary General referred to Annex 1 of the Minutes of 14th Meeting of the Standing Committee 'Lessons learned - Kushiro 1993'. This text had inadvertently been omitted from the Minutes, but were now approved by consensus. No other matters arising were identified by the participants.

### 5) Presentation of Report on Activities by the Convention Bureau since the Fourteenth Meeting of the Standing Committee

The Secretary General presented the highlights of Bureau activities since October 1993. Three countries had joined the Convention (Estonia, the Philippines, and Turkey), and 75 additional sites had been designated, bringing the total area to nearly 44 million hectares. The Regina Amendments had entered into force on 1 May 1994, a number of regional meetings had been organized, national Ramsar Committee meetings attended, national consultations held, and contacts made with countries preparing for accession. Other conservation activities pertaining to wise use, listed sites, international cooperation, and training were also reported upon. Improved regional contacts were stated as being at least partly due to the new structure of the Bureau's technical division. Considerable staff time had also been devoted to communications activities (see also Agenda Item 18) and administration, including personnel matters, office administration and finances, and meeting organization.

The observer from IUCN stated that reporting on cooperation with Ramsar had become more cumbersome since it presently involved about 15 Heads of Programme. Through decentralization, this number would increase; 30 to 40 staff at headquarters and regional offices would have reporting obligations for Ramsar matters. However the IUCN observer noted that a recent evaluation of support to Ramsar in Africa had indicated satisfactory achievements regarding wise use, listed areas, and training. A report was expected to be

compiled in December 1994. The Chairperson expressed the hope that the IUCN restructuring process would benefit IUCN/Ramsar cooperation.

The observer from IWRB reported on the linkage between IWRB, Wetlands for the Americas, and the Asian Wetland Bureau which was proving useful in pooling staff, financial, and technical resources. Since the beginning of this integration process, which had been started in November 1992, many positive developments could be noted (see also Agenda Item 11 'Conservation of Listed Sites'), including collaborative efforts with other convention secretariats, national initiatives, and regional training programmes. The Chairperson strongly supported the idea of strengthened alliances with a view to increased efficiency.

The observer from BirdLife International welcomed the excellent tools Ramsar Conferences had been providing. He cautioned however that conscientious use of such tools within the Contracting Parties was of prime importance. BirdLife International hoped that the standard of application in individual Contracting Parties would rise. He added that the ever increasing number of BirdLife partners would be watching the actions of Contracting Parties closely and hoped to provide positive criticism. Contracting Parties were encouraged to use BirdLife International in their efforts to implement the Convention. The Chairperson welcomed such positive NGO action and advice.

The observer from WWF referred to his organization's role in meeting the aspirations of the local communities. He emphasized that people were not only part of the problem, but should also be part of the solution. Human aspects needed to be integrated into the efforts to save wetlands. The Chairperson expressed the hope that all Ramsar partner organizations would continue to cooperate with the Ramsar programme en route to the 1996 Brisbane Conference.

#### 6) Presentation of Reports by Regional Representatives

The representatives of the seven Ramsar Regions reported comprehensively on Ramsar work in their regions (copies of Annex 1, 32 pages, are available from the Convention Bureau upon request).

#### 7) Review of Convention Finances

a) 1994 Core Income: The Secretary General expressed concern over the tightness of the present system which continued to cause difficulties. Cash-flow problems were especially worrisome. Despite a regular invoicing and reminder procedure, only about 84 per cent of the 1993 annual contributions had been received to date. At present this percentage stood at 72 per cent with regard to the 1994 contributions and there appeared to be a need to establish a reserve in case of cash flow problems in the future.

Finally with regard to the provision of financial services by IUCN, steps had been taken by the IUCN Director General to improve the situation and the Bureau was now satisfied that problems would not recur.

The representative from Japan, supported by the representative from Germany and by the UK observer, felt it was extremely important that annual contributions be paid regularly so as to avoid unnecessary pressure upon the Bureau. Not only was it wrong in principle that countries which did not pay could still apply for WCF funds, for example, but the observer from UK also felt that this could discourage certain Contracting Parties from making additional

financial contributions.

The observer from Austria suggested that the allocation of WCF funds could perhaps be made dependent upon payment of annual contributions. The representative from India, supported by the observer from Brazil, felt that sanctions could lead to unfair situations and suggested that the opportunity of the 25th Anniversary be seized to seek additional funds from donor countries and partner organizations instead. The representative from Kenya also felt there had to be a mechanism whereby Contracting Parties could be influenced to meet their financial commitments; he referred to the positive discussion on this point at the recent African regional meeting and that the payment of the small sums involved for the African countries was an important manifestation of their commitment to the Convention. The observer from IUCN added that its regional office contacts should be used in this effort.

The representative from Australia, seconded by Canada and New Zealand, felt it was inappropriate to simply note the problem. Instead he proposed the setting up of a Standing Committee Subgroup to consider other options and the related question of a reserve fund. This was agreed to, the Subgroup being composed of the representatives of Kenya (as Chair), Australia, Brazil, India, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom.

When presenting its report (see Annex 2), the Finance Subgroup outlined a number of options that would be helpful for the Bureau in its effort to bring in annual contributions. There were some observations from the representative of Canada and the observer from Brazil as to the appropriateness of certain proposed measures.

The Chairperson concluded that the Bureau should take selective action depending on an assessment of the individual circumstances of the Contracting Parties concerned. Also regional representatives could assist in this effort.

On the subject of a reserve fund, there was agreement that it should not be based on an increase in present contributions. The representative from Germany pointed out that the establishment of a reserve fund would be unnecessary if contributions were always paid in good time, while the representative from New Zealand would give preference to improved business planning, thus also avoiding the reserve fund measure.

In acknowledging the need for a limited reserve to assist with cash-flow problems, the Standing Committee requested the Bureau to prepare a paper for its further consideration, dealing with possible sources of income for the fund, its uses, and rules for its management. With a note of thanks to the Finance Subgroup, the Chairperson closed this agenda item by asking the Bureau to prepare the document on possible options well in advance of the next meeting of the Committee.

#### b) 1994 Core Expenditure

The Secretary General presented an updated account of the current status and requested an understanding for the need to withhold certain budgeted allocations of funds (for example to the Monitoring Procedure, the Newsletter, and the Wetland Conservation Fund) until such time as more annual contributions were available. The meeting gave its agreement so to proceed.

#### c) 1994 Project Income and d) 1994 Project Expenditure

The Standing Committee received the information relating to 1994 Project income and expenditure.

e) 1995 Income Projections

The Secretary General informed the meeting that pending the report of the Finance Subgroup, invoices and reminders would be processed as usual.

f) 1995 Priorities for Expenditure

The Secretary General presented this subitem, pointing out that it was to be considered a guideline only, which could, if necessary, be revisited after consideration of Agenda Item 8 (Work Plan and Business Plan) . Details were provided regarding the recently established support procedure to regional representatives.

In this context and referring to the staff organization chart presented under this subheading, the Chairperson conveyed her best wishes to the technical staff appointed since the last Standing Committee meeting: Montserrat Carbonell (International Cooperation/ Neotropics), Tom Kabii (Wise Use/Africa) , Tim Jones (Listed Sites/Europe) , as well as Scott Frazier (Database Officer at IWRB in replacement of Tim Jones there) .

g) Auditors' Reports

The Auditors' reports were noted by the Committee. With reference to the report which covered both the year 1993 as well as the 1991-1993 triennial period, the Secretary General expressed satisfaction over the growth of Convention operations, but also reiterated his concern over the lack of a financial reserve within the Ramsar accounts.

8) Approval of Bureau Work Plan and Convention Business Plan for 1995

Work Plan

This agenda item was introduced by the Senior Technical Officer who reported that the format of the 1995 work plan primarily followed past practice. It was the result of fruitful consultations with Ramsar partner organizations and directly followed the Kushiro Framework Document (RES. C.5.1) with its divisions into essential and desirable activities, the latter further divided into high, medium, and low priority items.

The representative from Australia urged the Committee to note and support the need for increasing the number of Contracting Parties in the Oceanian Region. In response, the Secretary General stated that this was a priority in the run-up to the Brisbane Conference and stated that the Bureau would look to the representatives of the Oceanian region for advice on how best to achieve this. The observer from the United Kingdom urged the Bureau to assist in facilitating access of Contracting Parties to the Global Environment Fund (GEF) , especially in its contacts through the Interim Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity. The Secretary General agreed that formal contacts with GEF were indeed desirable and explained efforts to date in this regard, but a niche needed to be found for appropriate links between Contracting Parties and GEF.

Following a query from the observer from Austria, the Senior Technical Officer noted the EC's proposed wetland management guidelines in which the European Union wished to

reflect the Ramsar Management Planning Guidelines. This interest of the EU in drawing upon a Kushiro product and its link with the Ramsar philosophy was found to be most encouraging. According to the representative from Germany, this had also prompted the EU to support a trilateral project in the Waddensea.

The representative from India complimented the Bureau on a comprehensive draft work plan. In particular he felt that specific actions should be highlighted by regions and that local people and their traditional knowledge needed to be recognized in the work plan, which should also reflect the changes in the international scene regarding biological diversity and forestry conservation. The Secretary General responded that this would indeed be a focus of the 25th Anniversary Programme and he welcomed the assistance from the regional representative in preparing documentation for this purpose.

In response to the offer by the observer from WWF to contribute to the Brisbane Conference in relation to development assistance, the Secretary General welcomed any documentation regarding a potential contribution by WWF. However the Ramsar role in the field of development assistance would perhaps be somewhat different from that of an NGO, most likely in the form of encouraging development assistance bodies in their wetland conservation efforts.

The Chairperson wondered how the Bureau would be able to cope with the work-load of organizing a considerable number of regional meetings in 1995 in addition to preparing for the Brisbane Conference. The Secretary General noted that the number of potential meetings as listed in the supporting documentation would indeed have to be scaled down. He suggested that it was only for financial reasons that they were listed as medium priority activities, which referred to the necessity for external funding.

Noting the various points raised, the Bureau's work plan for 1995 was approved by consensus.

#### Business Plan

The Secretary General warmly acknowledged the assistance of Canada in the preparation of this document. He recalled the discussions at the 1993 Standing Committee meeting which had led to an initial draft business plan for 1994. Not only had the Government of Canada delegated a planning expert to participate in the July partners' meeting on work plan discussions, but also in August the representative from Canada had personally devoted time and effort to developing a greatly improved business plan document.

Following the presentation by the Senior Technical Officer of the 1995 business plan structure and its links to the Kushiro Resolution RES C.5.1 on the Programme, the representative from Canada underlined that a business plan was needed to cater for immediate programming needs, and he confirmed that this document now gave a clear picture of products and results. A strategic plan was however required to address longer-term activities (see Agenda Item 17) . In his opinion there was no need for any additional planning documents. He added that if efficiency could be achieved in documentation, it could also be achieved in fact.

The representative from Canada considered that in future the work plan should be incorporated into the Business Plan. Financial information should concisely contain the requirements from Management and from the Standing Committee and should also clearly

spell out what is expected of individual staff members. This would allow the Standing Committee to maintain some oversight and allow staff to have a clear view of the day-to-day functioning of the Bureau. He concluded by suggesting that the triennial work programme for Brisbane should also be in this format.

The observer from United Kingdom noted favourably the very constructive comments made by Canada and offered the support of his Department in the exercise of integrating staff time and financial allocations into the business plan document.

Urging the Bureau to keep its business plan quite simple, the observer from the USA also asked that Canada maintain its counselling function and endorsed the proposal to limit planning documentation to two papers.

Consensus having been reached on the necessity for more concise and fewer work planning documents, including the merging of the work plan with the business plan, the Chairperson closed the discussion under this agenda item.

#### 9) Review of Administrative Matters

This item was discussed in closed session.

#### 10) Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

While the supporting documentation contained the report of the first STRP meeting (Argentina, 18-21 January 1994), the representative from Hungary reported on the results of the second Panel meeting, which had been held in Hungary from 6 to 8 September 1994. As directed by the October 1993 meeting of the Standing Committee, three priority issues had been addressed:

- inclusion of fish and fish habitat as criteria for listing wetlands of international importance;
- prioritization of sites listed on the Montreux Record for implementation of the Monitoring Procedure; and
- the terms 'ecological character' and 'change in ecological character'.

The full report of the September meeting is attached as Annex 3.

On behalf of the Bureau, the Senior Technical Officer thanked Hungary for hosting this Panel meeting, the venue of which had been very conducive to an excellent working atmosphere. Underlining that there would be ample opportunity for further input, he asked the Standing Committee to consider the account of the recent meeting as a progress report.

Following the proposal by the representative from New Zealand, the Panel was asked to pursue its tasks in continuation of its 1994 mandate.

Several delegates, including the representatives of Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, as well as the observers from France and the United States, complimented the Panel on the considerable progress achieved in a relatively short time. Regarding the fish and fish habitat criteria, there was consensus that the existing criteria were not to be re-addressed, but that they would be added to and submitted for approval by the Standing Committee in 1995. The urgent need for follow-up to the Monitoring Procedure activity was also recognized. Regarding the question of ecological character, the work of IWRB was gratefully



acknowledged.

In response to a query by the observer from the United Kingdom, the Secretary General stressed that the role of STRP was not that of a decision-making body, and corrected an error in the Minutes from the first meeting of the Panel in which this might have been implied.

With relation to the Panel's Terms of Reference and following the proposal by the observer from France, it was agreed that these were adequately covered by Kushiro Resolution RES. C.5.5.

## 11) Conservation of Listed Sites

### a) Review of Ramsar List

The Senior Technical Officer introduced this agenda item, followed by a verbal presentation by the IWRB Ramsar Database Officer on changes in the List since 30 June 1994. He added that the List was now also being produced in French and Spanish. Of the three latest new Ramsar members, both Estonia and Philippines had designated one site, whereas Turkey had listed five sites.

Additional designations had also been received from Indonesia (1) , the Russian Federation (32) , and the United Kingdom (7) , bringing the total number of Listed sites to 713.

The Senior Technical Officer apologized to the observer from the United Kingdom for having omitted a number of recently designated UK sites in the cover sheet of the documentation relating to this item.

### b) Status of Montreux Record

In an effort to address concerns raised by the Standing Committee last year and with a view to adapting the Montreux Record, the Senior Technical Officer reported that individual contacts had been made with every Contracting Party concerned.

Among the information received in this context from individual Contracting Parties, Denmark had asked that the Ringkobing Fjord Ramsar site be removed from the Record whereas the Czech Republic had advised that two of its sites should be added to it. The representative from Senegal informed the Committee of his country's desire to retain its sites on the Montreux Record in spite of considerable progress having been made. The representative from Iran requested that several names and site dimensions among the 18 Iranian Ramsar sites be clarified; this was duly noted by the Bureau for subsequent amendment of the List. The decision announced by Germany to remove the Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer und Dollart from the Montreux Record would be implemented once notification was provided to the Bureau in written form.

### c) Ramsar Database: Progress Report

The Senior Technical Officer referred to the report contained in the supporting documentation as well as to a complementary update. Greater application of data and review of the geographical material were among the main focuses of the present triennium. According to the IWRB Database Officer, the main handicaps were the poor quality of maps and gaps in

the submission of information, and he called upon Contracting Parties for their support in rectifying this.

He then reported on tentative proposals for IWRB publications, a 'Summary of World Ramsar Sites' and an 'Analysis of Ramsar Sites'. It was further proposed to produce Directory updates on sites designated since the Kushiro Conference in 1993.

The Chairperson urged Standing Committee members to take steps so that countries in their respective regions provide data sheets and adequate maps. It was also agreed that the Database Officer would supply each regional representative with a list of gaps pertaining to his/her region.

#### d) Review of Monitoring Procedure: 1988-1994 Activities

In response to the request made by the Standing Committee last year, a summary report had been prepared by the Bureau with the aid of a summer intern; its conclusions were tabled.

The report itself on the 32 missions carried out since the inception of the Monitoring Procedure had not been tabled, but would be broadened in the light of further follow-up in 1995.

A comprehensive document, including draft recommendations for submission to the Brisbane Conference (perhaps suggesting a new name for the Monitoring Procedure and certainly with a more formalized structure for the Procedure) would be submitted to the Standing Committee in September 1995.

In response to a query raised by the observer from Japan, the Senior Technical Officer agreed to the necessity for standardized application of the Monitoring Procedure. The representatives of both Germany and Kenya called for strengthened follow-up to Monitoring Procedure missions. Mission reports should be clearly identified as such and should also be submitted within a reasonable time-frame. This in turn would confer a clear responsibility upon the country visited for implementing such recommendations.

#### 12) Wise Use of Wetlands

In a report about development with regard to the promotion of the concept of the wise use of wetlands, the Secretary General noted that the 'Wise Use Action Plan' had been well received and that information was presently awaited from the Netherlands on possible application of the Plan. He also informed the meeting that the Bureau's publication 'Towards the Wise Use of Wetlands' had been a very popular sales item and that it had had a good reception at regional meetings.

Several comments were received on national or subnational wetland policy developments in Australia, India, Uganda, and Thailand. The growing recognition that wetland systems needed to be managed in a total catchment approach was also noted.

In response to interventions by the representatives of Canada and India on the integration of biological diversity aspects into the Bureau's work plan, the Senior Technical Officer explained that national wetland policies were indeed considered vital for delivering wise use. It was noted that wise use activities would continue to be a main focus for the work of the Bureau.

### 13) Wetland Reserves and Training

On the subject of training, the Technical Officer responsible for this portfolio specifically referred to a one-month training course for wetland managers which was presently taking place in Japan with the participation of Government officials from China, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The International Wetland Centre in Kushiro City, to be officially established in early 1995, would concentrate on the training of wetland managers in Asia.

Regarding reserves, the linkage between the Ramsar database and WCMC was pointed out, as was the fact that information materials were provided at Ramsar site Visitor Centres. Two meetings on public awareness of biodiversity and wetland issues had been organized by the Ramsar Center Japan (a Japanese NGO) in Indonesia and Thailand in 1994.

As a result promotional materials on biodiversity and wetland issues in Asia were expected to be produced for presentation to the Brisbane Conference. With the aim of establishing a network of wetland reserves along the East Asia Flyway, a workshop will be held in Kushiro, Japan in November 1994, funded by Australia and Japan, and organized by AWB and IWRB-Japan.

The observer from WWF expressed the hope that local people be involved in such training. The Secretary General stated that this was indeed important and pointed out that considerable emphasis would be placed upon training and public awareness, both of which would be major components of the Ramsar 25th Anniversary Campaign.

The Senior Technical Officer added information pertaining to Europe with particular emphasis on the IUCN Action Plan on Protected Areas in Europe. Under the title 'Parks for Life', this publication had considerable relevance to Ramsar, also with respect to Agenda Item 14 on International Cooperation. He also referred to wetland management planning courses funded by the Government of the Netherlands and to the WWF-funded IWRB training courses which, after an initial three-year period, were presently under review.

The representative from Kenya reported on a number of subregional meetings in Africa which had also focused on training activities. This was complemented by the representative from Senegal who reported upon regional meetings between Mauritania and his country in which training aspects were regularly integrated, and confirmed that further efforts were planned.

In conclusion the Chairperson confirmed the continuing need for the further establishment of wetland reserves and for tireless efforts in the field of training.

### 14) International Cooperation

The Secretary General presented a report on actions undertaken during the past year. He pointed out that several Technical Officers were involved in work related to Article 5 of the Convention on shared wetland sites, shared species, and development assistance. He recognized that regional contacts and consultations were a major aspect of international cooperation, a fact which had been underlined quite clearly by the reports of the regional representatives. Contacts with partner organizations, other convention secretariats, and development agencies, all of which must be the focus of concrete action, also fell into this category.

Regarding partner organizations, with which two important meetings had been held during 1994, the Secretary General reported on efforts made to institutionalize such cooperation with a view to increased effectiveness. The Bureau was therefore most supportive of the efforts being made towards a union between IWRB, AWB, and WA. The valuable support provided by BirdLife International and WWF was also acknowledged.

The Secretary General gave great emphasis to efforts underway to forge cooperation with other nature conservation convention secretariats and reported on specific activities with the secretariats of the Biological Diversity, World Heritage, Migratory Species, CITES, and Bern Conventions.

Consultations between France and Germany, and also between Austria and Hungary concerning contiguous sites, a ministerial meeting on the Waddensea, and the Black Sea Action Plan were items listed by the Secretary General as illustrations of international cooperation on shared wetlands.

With regard to shared species, reference was made inter alia to shared interest with the Bonn Convention on migratory species whereas on development assistance, the Wise Use Action Plan, as well as limited progress with GEF, could be listed in addition to the information contained in the supporting documentation.

While appreciating support received from NGO partners, the representative from Kenya made an appeal to the Standing Committee to the effect that the African region still required greater support in the form of a continent-wide programme, such as WA provided for the Neotropical region and AWB provided for the Asian region.

The Chairperson noted the acknowledgement of the meeting that international cooperation must be a very major focus of the Bureau's operation.

#### 15) Wetland Conservation Fund (WCF)

The Secretary General introduced this agenda item, followed by a concise presentation by the Programme Assistant of the voluminous documentation submitted to the Committee.

##### a) Presentation of Report 1990-1993

The Programme Assistant, who has responsibility for the administration of the Wetland Conservation Fund (WCF), provided a summary of the current status of each project financed to date. She presented several conclusions on experience to date, including the fact that only about half of the recipient countries were reporting within the set time-frames. The main conclusion however was the fact that insufficient support was available, both in terms of funds received and in terms of the number of donors to the Fund.

##### b) Review of Status of Fund Balance

Bearing in mind that for cash-flow reasons the 1994 core contribution of SFR 100,000 to the Fund could not yet be made, the Secretary General advised that only SFR 315,000 was available for allocation. The figure which appeared in the supporting documentation was different because some announced income had not as yet been received.

The representative from Canada recalled that in Kushiro the amount of SFR 100,000 had been decided for the WCF to give it a solid basis and he regretted that the capability of meeting the essential list of proposals should be hindered for cash-flow reasons.

The Secretary General noted the extremely small base of WCF donors and suggested that it was perhaps not essential to allocate all the funds available; alternatively some projects might be placed on a provisional list of approval pending the receipt of adequate funding.

He felt however that the failure to accept projects could rightly be considered a message about the lack of funds.

#### c) Consideration of Definition of Developing Countries

The Bureau paper on this subject was presented by the Secretary General who suggested that instead of adopting one list or another, or even preparing its own list of developing countries, it would be advisable to use discretion on a case-by-case basis. Reference was also made to the Convention on Biological Diversity which appeared to be in the process of preparing a list of developed countries as opposed to a list of developing countries. It was agreed to continue as in the past without using a set list of countries to determine eligibility.

#### d) Consideration of Project Requests for 1994 Allocations from the Fund

24 project proposals for a total amount of SFR 845,500 had been received (Africa 11, Asia 4, Neotropics 8, and Oceania 1) . They were listed in the supporting documentation with a one-page summary, followed by a two-page review, plus the project description.

The Programme Assistant reported that in order to allow sufficient time for review by partner organizations, the deadline for submission had been brought forward to 1 June 1994. The Chairperson acknowledged the efficient contribution of IUCN and IWRB in the technical review process, as well as the work of the Assistant Secretary General in the compilation of the comprehensive technical review papers.

The Secretary General felt that the review procedure, although it had worked out well, was still not ideal since there had been no opportunity for a final session with the partners. After consulting with the partners, he proposed that the WCF Guidelines needed further revision.

Taking account of technical merit and policy considerations, the Bureau had drawn up a tentative series of global priorities for the consideration of the Standing Committee. This list (Table 1 on page 29 of the supporting documentation) contained 10 projects that were considered essential by the Convention Bureau. The observer from the United States supported the Bureau proposal to follow a prioritized list.

In response to concern voiced by the representative from Australia, there was consensus that the emergency proposal from Papua New Guinea be considered together with the 10 projects on the priority list. It was noted however that the total funding requests for the top priority projects exceeded the available funds within the current WCF account.

The representative from Uruguay, supported by the observer from France, cautioned that such a procedure should be the exception to the rule.

The observer from France indicated that her Government was ready to support the Surinam proposal in conjunction with bilateral work carried out in French Guyana. The meeting noted with appreciation that the Surinam proposal was being supported directly by France.

The observer from United Kingdom noted that his Government would perhaps be in a position to support one or more projects on a bilateral basis, and that he would wish to seek advice from the Committee at the end of the allocation process as to which non-funded projects might most appropriately receive UK bilateral funding.

In the ensuing lengthy discussion several possible options were proposed by the representatives from New Zealand, Senegal, and Uruguay, and the observers from the United Kingdom and United States. Agreement was reached on New Zealand's proposal to the effect that an assessment be made of timing requirements for the application of the projects.

All projects in Table 1 (with the exception of the Surinam proposal, plus the Papua New Guinean emergency proposal) were approved within a phased allocation process (see Annex 4). Most of the projects will be funded immediately, but three applicants will be advised that their projects would be funded in 1995 only as resources became available. These included the proposals from Guinea (SFR 45,000 of which SFR 25,000 being initially withheld), Mauritania (SFR 40,000), and Uganda (in the amount of SFR 33,500, pending availability of funds). Cover for the overspending of SFR 2,000 on a previous Tanzanian project was also approved.

Referring to the recent regional meeting in Kenya, the Senior Technical Officer stressed the great expectations of Ramsar's African community in the Convention in general and the WCF in particular. A clear message of positive support by the Standing Committee therefore needed to be sent to those countries where implementation of projects would have to be delayed.

A proposal by the IWRB was noted to the effect that decisions on project allocations could be made easier if in future a project list were to be drawn up that coincided with the WCF funds available.

Finally it was agreed to amend the WCF guidelines to include a gathering of partner organizations after the review process so as to allow for full agreement on priorities. The date of submission for project proposals was therefore brought forward to 31 March.

#### 16) Ramsar's Role in Fund-raising

Reference was made to the Bureau's role in sensitizing development agencies in directing or acquiring financial support for wetland conservation activities in developing countries. Despite some success, more should be done to generate support for wetland conservation activities. However in view of constraints on staff time and the cost involved, further guidance was requested from the Committee, especially since there were no additional budgetary provisions for fund-raising activities.

By way of information, attention was drawn to the list of Convention projects outside the scope of WCF for which, as requested by the Standing Committee at its 1993 meeting, brief descriptions had been provided. In this context, the Senior Technical Officer noted that the Bureau's Conservation Unit felt increasing concern on the level of expectations placed upon the Bureau and voiced serious reservations about taking over responsibility for administering

additional projects.

The representative from Spain, supported by the representatives from Canada, Kenya, and India, as well as the observer from the UK, suggested that the Ramsar Bureau should not be a fund-raising body, but rather a communication channel with a coordinating, catalytic, project-oriented role between Contracting Parties requiring assistance and relevant funding bodies.

While the observer from Switzerland felt there was only the choice between finding additional funding sources or increasing the core contributions, the representative from Australia suggested this complex issue be addressed in a half-day session at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

In conclusion the Chairperson recognized that the fund-raising aspect would have future implications, and that she personally would prefer the Bureau to play a facilitator role. It was agreed to bring this item forward to the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

## 17) Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

### a) Status of Preparations

The representative from Australia made a concise presentation on the status of preparations for the Brisbane Conference, which had officially been launched by the Federal Environment Minister on 5 October 1994. He displayed the Conference logo on a flag and distributed posters and lapel pins to the participants.

Reference was made to the process which had led to the choice of Brisbane as the venue for the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (to be held from 19 to 27 March 1996), with appreciation expressed to the Secretary General and Administrator for their help in this decision-making process.

Australia and New Zealand both hoped that with Australia hosting the 1996 Conference in the Southern Hemisphere, South Pacific countries which were noticeably absent from the current list of Contracting Parties could be attracted to the Convention.

The hosting of a workshop on the 'Wise Use of Coastal Wetlands' in Darwin prior to the Brisbane event was subject to further consultations with the Northern Territory and Queensland State Governments. Post-Conference tours were being considered to outstanding sites in both Australia and New Zealand.

The Chairperson expressed her appreciation for the major preparatory efforts made by Australia and for which full credit was due to its representative, Mr Bill Phillips of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, and the other members of the Ramsar Convention Organizing Committee.

By adding the Bureau's perspective on the work that needed to be carried out during the remaining 522 days until the Brisbane Conference, the Secretary General fully endorsed the Chairperson's note of thanks to the future host government. The Bureau would remain in close contact with the Australian authorities, particularly with a view to finalizing the necessary cooperative agreement with the host government. He also referred to a planning document within the Bureau 'Milestones to the Brisbane Conference' which was already being used to guide preparations. Finally he noted that as in the spirit of the Kushiro Conference, it was hoped that a large number of representatives from developing countries

and countries with economies in transition would be able to attend the Conference.

#### b) Discussion of Conference Programme including Workshops

The Senior Technical Officer presented the draft programme for the Brisbane Conference, prepared in cooperation with the partners and the host government. It had attempted to take into account the conclusions of the 1993 'Lessons learned' exercise of the Standing Committee. In this spirit 'workshops' had been replaced by 'technical sessions' which would more adequately reflect their nature given the number of participants involved. The content of these sessions had been drawn up in consultation between the Australian host, STRP, and the Bureau. They would contain fewer presentations with clear draft products for debate. The second to last Conference day would be called 'Oceania Day' and focus on Oceanian wetlands, coastal wetlands in particular.

In the ensuing discussion, the Secretary General sought the guidance of the Committee as to where the mid-term or strategic plan could be fitted into the draft Conference programme. Pursuant to proposals from Canada and the United States, it was felt that it could be introduced in the report of the Standing Committee and then be best accommodated in the programme discussions, under Conference Agenda Item XI.

The representative from New Zealand, supported by the representatives from Canada and Kenya, felt that the Conference programme should give greater emphasis to regional consultations and that regional reporting should be a forward-looking critical analysis while also reflecting on aspects of the past.

On the subject of the technical sessions and referring to the so-called Trondheim Declaration, the representative from Canada proposed considering also the subject of mires and peatlands.

While the observer from the USA urged that the subject of indigenous people be addressed in one of the technical sessions (which also followed a proposal from the STRP), the representative from Spain was not happy with the proposed title of such a session. The Committee agreed that Technical Session F should focus on 'Community-based wetland management' while retaining a linkage to 25th Anniversary activities.

On the subject of the 25th Anniversary celebrations, the representative from Australia expressed the hope that the Australian Head of Government would be in attendance.

He mentioned that attractive ways were being sought (for example satellite technology) to attract the presence of political leaders and pioneers of the Convention at this celebration and added that Australia would naturally welcome sponsorships for this venture.

The observer from Brazil, stressing the importance of follow-up to Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit, was pleased to note the technical session on 'Interaction with the Convention of Biological Diversity and GEF'.

The Chairperson referred to the STRP recommendation on fish and fish habitat which would be considered under Technical Session E.

The observer from the United Kingdom cautioned against concentrating the wise use discussions on national wetland policies. Instead he felt it was necessary to adjust the thrust of the first technical session to integrate concern for wetland conservation into national



sustainable development policies.

In conclusion it was agreed that on the basis of these inputs from the Standing Committee, the proposed programme and timetable would be reviewed with the host government for distribution to all Contracting Parties at the beginning of 1995.

#### c) Mid-term Strategic Planning of Convention Programme

The Chairperson recalled the Standing Committee's mandate contained in Kushiro Resolution RES. C.5.2 and which had prompted the drafting of this paper by the Bureau. The Secretary General pointed out that this was a preliminary document on objectives and proposed activities, as yet without any costing. The Committee's guidance was sought as to how this document could be linked with other planning tools so as to provide the Brisbane Conference with a coordinated strategy.

There was general agreement that the proposed draft was a good start and that the Bureau deserved recognition for the work carried out so far.

The observer from the United Kingdom felt that the creation or restoration of wetlands with nature conservation spin-offs should also be an area of future Ramsar involvement. The role of industry and the private sector was critically important in this regard. The representative from Spain supported this proposal of integrating wetland conservation policies with those of other areas of interest, while the observer from Austria added that restoration should indeed lead to reversing the degradation process.

Reiterating his request for an approach at the local level, the representative from India also requested that the strategic plan be carefully focused. This was supported by the observer from Brazil who urged that there be integration with Agenda 21.

The representative from Canada agreed with the points raised by his colleagues from the United Kingdom, Spain, and India as regards the integration of wetland concerns into other policies.

The representative from New Zealand voiced agreement with the numerous comments made and added that partnerships were necessary with bodies that would advocate other uses of wetlands.

The representative from Kenya wished to see included in the plan the need to quantify the global wetland resource and to establish the status and trends which would then allow for determining actions based on local circumstances.

The Chairperson, referring to the proposal made by Canada, proceeded to establish a Standing Committee Subgroup on Strategic Planning to carry this work further. It was agreed that Kenya should chair this planning body, with membership from Australia, Canada, and Spain. The partner organizations were also welcome to participate in the work of the Subgroup. [Note: The group subsequently decided to hold its first meeting in March 1995 at the Bureau's headquarters in Switzerland].

The Bureau noted the need for a product to be ready by June 1995 for submission to the next meeting of the Standing Committee in September 1995.

The offer made by the representative from India that the Subgroup might meet during the March 1995 Asian regional meeting, was gratefully acknowledged.

The Chairman of the Subgroup underlined the collective responsibility of the Standing Committee and the need to draw on all available expertise and experience in this exercise. He added that written comments by the Committee members would be greatly appreciated.

#### d) Requests for National Reports

In his presentation the Senior Technical Officer stressed the value of national reports as a source of information on the application of the Convention. In order to prepare for the Brisbane Conference efficiently, Contracting Parties were urged not only to follow the proposed outline, but also to submit the reports within the given time-frame, namely by 1 September 1995. Processing national reports would be facilitated further if they could be submitted in a wordprocessed form on computer diskettes.

Following its call for national reports by diplomatic channel early in 1995, the Bureau would respect past practice in issuing reminders, namely by drawing the attention of Contracting Parties to their reporting obligation at the time of regional meetings and by asking regional representatives for support in this process.

The representative from Kenya requested that a heading be provided in the outline for reporting on bilateral support received.

The Chairperson reiterated the Bureau's call for national reports and she expressed the sentiment that Contracting Parties had a moral obligation to provide such national reports. She noted that the members of the Standing Committee had an obligation to assist in promoting the timely submission of these reports.

A report would have to be submitted to the Brisbane Conference in relation to Wetland Conservation Fund applications, which could be another incentive for concise national reporting.

#### e) Consideration of Alternative Scale of Contributions

The Secretary General reported that in response to Kushiro Resolution RES. C.5.2, contact had been made with several bodies regarding alternatives to the United Nations scale. As a result of the Bureau's findings and with the support of the observer from the USA, it was agreed to maintain the status quo while pursuing the idea raised by the Biological Diversity Convention to encourage certain Parties to assume the obligations of developing country Parties, especially in view of the work needed to prepare the programme and budget for the next triennium.

The Committee agreed that the UN scale be applied in preparations for the Brisbane Conference. Following interventions from Brazil and South Africa, it was further agreed that the Standing Committee report to the Brisbane Conference should indicate that this matter was still open for future deliberation by the Conference.

### 18) Communications Activities

#### a) Review of Communications Activities

The Communications Officer reported that three issues of the Ramsar 'Newsletter', plus a special issue featuring the entry into force of the Regina Amendments, had been produced in 1994. Volume II of the 'Kushiro Proceedings' had been distributed to the meeting participants, while Volume III was due to be sent out in the near future. The 'Ramsar Manual', a concise reference work on all aspects of the Convention, had also been published and a publication on legal developments within the Convention was expected in early 1995.

It was noted that proceeds from the sale of publications in 1994 amounted to some SFR 14,000 which enabled the Bureau to launch a reprint of the successful 'Wise Use' book.

In this connection, the work carried out by Mr Tim Davis, Ramsar consultant and compiler of both the 'Wise Use' book and the 'Ramsar Manual', was gratefully acknowledged.

Following the entry into force of the Regina Amendments, the text of the Convention had been authenticated by UNESCO and reprinted by the Bureau (English/French/Spanish/German). The general Ramsar information package (InfoPack) had also been updated. Indeed the large number of information requests received by the Bureau would seem to indicate increased awareness of the Convention since the Kushiro Conference.

With regard to the use of the Ramsar logo and in view of an ever broadening spectrum of publications, it was noted that the relevant guidelines had been updated with necessary additional details.

Increased distribution of the 'Newsletter' could be a means of raising awareness of wetland matters. In order to widen the network of organizations and individuals, national Ramsar or wetland groups should be approached. The Communications Officer therefore requested meeting participants to provide the Bureau with the names and addresses of persons responsible for Ramsar sites/matters.

#### b) 25th Anniversary

The Communications Officer referred to a document that had been produced in English and French - mainly for fund-raising purposes. Its four parts contain:

- (1) a list of proposed publications (estimates based on production costs in Switzerland) ;
- (2) catalyzing actions at Ramsar sites;
- (3) regional training courses;
- (4) implementation of management plans.

The observer from the USA, whose input was gratefully acknowledged by the Committee, explained that his Government's support for the 25th Anniversary in the amount of US\$ 750,000 was considered part of its ongoing commitment to the Convention. He hoped the Committee would endorse the USA's proposal to make money available for training and public awareness activities in the Neotropics and the Caribbean. He also noted that the Government of Japan had provided considerable support in South-East Asia and expressed the hope that other donors would wish to support activities in other regions. This proposal was supported by the representative from Kenya.

In this context the Communications Officer acknowledged offers from France and from Shortlands Wetland Centre in Australia, the former wishing to support the production of a

'Manual on Caribbean Wetlands', the latter a computer programme for education on wetlands. The representative from India announced that he would approach his Government with a view to taking over the production of the proposed booklet on wetland biodiversity. Although its 1994 budget did not contain any 25th Anniversary budget allocations, the representative from Japan advised that activities such as training courses, publications, and workshops could be supported by the Central Government, the City of Kushiro and other public and private bodies. The observer from the United Kingdom promised that he would actively pursue possible options for funding with his Government.

All pledged contributions were warmly welcomed by the Chairperson. The generous contribution from the United States for application in the Neotropical region was especially welcomed and was duly endorsed. The Secretary General explained that existing structures in the Neotropics and among partner organizations would be called upon to deliver the products cited. He also expressed the hope that a long-term process would be launched for public awareness and training on wetland conservation in all regions through the 25th Anniversary programme.

The observer from the United Kingdom, echoed by the representatives of Australia and New Zealand, congratulated the Communications Officer on the coherent and well-written presentation.

The representative from Australia proposed that given the importance and scope of the subject, communications activities of the Bureau be addressed much earlier in the Standing Committee meeting agenda. The Chairperson endorsed this proposal and the Secretary General concurred. He indicated that the Bureau would be pleased to adjust the agenda in the future; this would be part of a general restructuring of the meeting, including limiting the documentation and condensing some of the reporting.

#### 19) Next Meeting of the Standing Committee

The Secretary General recalled the Montreux Conference Resolution which stipulated that the Standing Committee should meet at least once a year.

On behalf of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA), the representative from Australia was happy to invite the Committee to Brisbane, Australia for its 1995 meeting from 11 to 14 September 1995. The Australian invitation was gratefully accepted.

#### 20) Any Other Business

The Bureau reported on new site designations received from France (Mont St Michel which also enjoyed World Heritage status) and from the United States (Lower Connecticut River). The Bureau was also very happy to announce that news had just been received that Zaire had adhered to the Convention on 15 September 1994 and had designated two sites. Once confirmed by the Depositary, this encouraging new development will bring the total number of Contracting Parties to 84.

#### 21) Closing Remarks

Reviewing the work that had been undertaken during the present meeting, the Chairperson felt that a number of important matters had been addressed in a very cooperative way. She thanked all delegates for their collaborative participation. It was obvious that not everyone

would leave in a happy frame of mind, but she concluded that being happy was perhaps not an absolute requirement in carrying out necessary work.

The representative from India, echoed by the representatives from Kenya and New Zealand, as well as the observer from the USA, expressed appreciation to the Hungarian host for providing such excellent meeting arrangements and for the study tour; he praised the Chairperson for her efficient lead throughout the meeting and thanked the Bureau for its hard work.

Acknowledging these final remarks with gratitude, the Chairperson closed the meeting.

Rapporteur: Erika Luthi