

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE  
ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT  
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**  
Brisbane, Australia: 18 March 1996

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Standing Committee Minutes

Present

MEMBERS

**Africa**

Kenya (A. Koyo, Vice Chair)  
Alternate: Senegal (S. Sylla, A. Ndiaye)

**Asia**

India (S. S. Boparai, C. L. Trisal)  
Alternate: Jordan (Y. Al-Zu'bi)

**Eastern Europe**

Hungary (L. Lakos, Chair)  
Alternate: Russian Federation (S. Tveritinov)

**Neotropics**

Uruguay (R. Cal Johnston)  
Alternate: Panama (K. Díaz)

**North America**

Canada (J. McCuaig)

**Oceania**

New Zealand (J. Owen)  
Alternate: Papua New Guinea (G. Kula)

**Western Europe**

Spain (A. Fernandez de Tejada)  
Alternate: Germany (F. Dieterich, C. Paulus)

**Host of 1996 Conference**

Australia (P. Bridgewater, H. Bamsey,  
A. Shepherd)

**Host of 1993 Conference**

Japan (Messrs. Keiichi, Nikaido, Okuda,  
Komoda)

PERMANENT OBSERVERS

Switzerland (A. Antonietti)  
UK (G. Donald)  
IUCN (D. McDowell, J.-Y. Piro, A. N'diaye,  
T. Malisa)  
Wetlands International (M. Moser)

OBSERVERS

**Contracting Parties**

China (Li Lukang)  
France (G. Barnaud)  
Netherlands (G. Boere)  
USA (M. Jones, G. Cintron, P. Kaestner)

**Invited NGOs**

BirdLife International (J. O'Sullivan,  
D. Pritchard)  
WWF International (G. Shepherd, B. Gujja)

SECRETARIAT

Secretary General (D. Blasco)  
Senior Policy Adviser (M. Smart)  
Technical Officer, Africa (T. Kabii)  
Technical Officer, Asia (S. Kobayashi)  
Technical Officer, Europe (T. Jones)  
Technical Officer, Neotropics (M. Carbonell)  
Administrator (J. Tucker)  
Rapporteurs (D. Peck, T. Davis)

APOLOGIES

Mexico (Alternate, North America)

**Agenda Item 1**  
**Opening and Welcoming Remarks**

**Hungary (Chair)**

1. welcomed the participants and expressed thanks to the Australian hosts for preparations.

**Agenda Item 2**  
**Adoption of Agenda**

2. The agenda was adopted by consensus.

**Agenda Item 3**  
**Admission of Observers**

3. China, France, the Netherlands, and the United States were welcomed as Contracting Party observers.
4. BirdLife International and WWF International were welcomed as observers.

**Agenda Item 4**  
**Matters arising from the Minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

**4(a) and 4(b) Preparations, and Wetland Conservation Fund**

**The Secretary General**

5. reported on preparations for the Brisbane COP and on the Bureau's preparation of conference documentation. He believed all decisions of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting have been executed.
6. He sought clarification concerning Wetland Conservation Fund proposals approved as "priority B" projects. The 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting had mentioned 1) certifying them as worthy, 2) actively seeking other funding for them, and 3) funding them as new money became available. The SG believed option 1) was intended, since there is not enough money available, and the Bureau's ability to seek other funding is so limited that it would be unfair to hold out much hope of success.

**Canada**

7. suggested that something between 1) and 2) should be preferred, some way of making these projects known elsewhere, rather than passively waiting to endorse them if asked.

**Uruguay**

8. pointed out that both priorities a) and b) were fully approved and funds were actively to be sought, and noted that some b) projects from Oceania were indeed funded; he urged the Bureau to seek out funding for the other approved 1995 projects so that 1996 proposals will not be adversely affected.

**Kenya**

9. noted that the same problem will recur, for there will always be more good projects than available funding, thus any decisions here will make a precedent.

**Switzerland**

10. suggested that the priority b) projects from 1995 shall become a "higher" priority by using the WCF money from 1996. Moreover, the Australian pledge contributions might be used partly for the unfunded 1995 priority b) projects.

**Hungary (Chair)**

11. noted that this idea would require investigation into earmarked purposes of the pledges.

**Uruguay**

12. observed that Contracting Parties with approved but unfunded projects feel frustrated; agreed that the Bureau cannot do fundraising, but urged the Bureau to send letters about these projects to potential funding sources. If that should be unsuccessful, funding them from pledge money should be explored. If that should be unsuccessful, they should be given priority for funding from 1996 WCF money, since they have already been given Standing Committee approval.

**The UK**

13. felt that because the Committee approved of a project as worthy does not commit it to funding it; all options should be kept open for future uses of available funds.

**The Secretary General**

14. pointed out that with the present system of soliciting projects every year, there shall always be some projects left over. Otherwise, projects should be invited only as money is available. If the Standing Committee were to fund 1995 projects now, there would be very little left for 1996 proposals.

**Uruguay**

15. doubted whether the Committee should have approved projects without having funds for them, and wondered why some priority b) projects did receive funding whilst others did not. Nonetheless, Uruguay agreed to support the view that, after seeking funding and considering funding them from pledges, they should be considered anew along with 1996 proposals on an equal basis, with some attention paid to their particular circumstances.

**Canada**

16. explained that the rationale for approving priorities a) and b) was to show their worthiness; limiting approval to available funding would have in effect disapproved of some that were also worthy. This method was meant to keep open the possibility of finding more funding.

**Hungary (Chair)**

17. urged the Parties with approved priority b) projects to continue seeking alternative funding for them anyway, using the considerable credit that Ramsar approval, with vetting from IUCN and Wetlands International, should confer in the minds of potential funding sources.

- **Decision 17.1: The Bureau should a) approach donors seeking funding for priority b) 1995 projects; b) then investigate using pledge money for them; and c) failing that, review them once again with 1996 proposals to the Wetland Conservation Fund.**

**4(c) Minutes of Standing Committee Meetings**

**Hungary (Chair)**

18. described the development of the new paragraph-numbered format of SC Meeting minutes and finds it preferable to the narrative method as it allows easier reference to actions and decisions. Objections to the circulated draft minutes were heard from the Government of Japan, to the effect that numbered "decisions" implied that the actual wording had been approved. The Bureau then substituted "to be noted" for "decisions" and denumbered them, using only paragraph numbering for reference.

**Japan**

- 18a. expressed its view that minutes should be recorded precisely and objectively, which is a main purpose of minutes.

**The USA**

19. noted that as long as all members have the chance to review draft minutes and make comments before they become final, there should be no objection. The Secretary General's clear format would be preferable.

**Hungary (Chair)**

20. observed that verbatim decisions would be too time-consuming to agree upon on a routine basis, and would seem unnecessary as most SC decisions are made by consensus with a clear general understanding of the sense.

**Japan**

21. said that it had no objection to the following decision.

- **Decision 17.2: It was agreed that minutes of SC meetings will use paragraph numbering and numbered decisions to facilitate future reference.**

**BirdLife International**

22. requested circulation of notice of meetings and draft minutes to observers to be formally provided for by an amendment to Rule of Procedure 16, to say minutes shall be “communicated to all Parties and observers and partners”.

- **Decision 17.3: Following Australia’s suggestion, it was agreed to record the Committee’s intention to formulate the wording of Rules 12 and 16 for this purpose and vote on the changed wording at the next meeting.**

**Agenda Item 5**

**Review of Convention Finances**

**5(a) Financial Report for Fiscal Year 1995**

**The UK (Chair of the Subgroup on Finance)**

23. referred to SC-17 DOC.4, notes of yesterday’s meeting of the Subgroup on Finance, and observed that the projected deficit has been avoided, with a surplus of SFR 28,891. The Subgroup had commended the strenuous efforts by the Secretary General to avoid a deficit, and had expressed gratitude to Germany for a timely additional contribution. The Subgroup recommended placing the surplus into the Reserve Fund, assuming one is established, and urged Contracting Parties to help avoid exchange losses by paying contributions in Swiss francs.

**The USA**

24. agreed with the Reserve Fund idea, but pointed out that whether Contracting Parties can make their contributions in Swiss francs will depend upon their national laws, and in the case of the USA that will be impossible.

- **Decision 17.4: It was agreed to recommend that the 1995 surplus be put into a Reserve Fund, assuming that one will be established.**
- **Decision 17.5: It was agreed that Contracting Parties should be urged to pay their contributions in Swiss francs, where possible.**

**Uruguay**

25. echoed the Subgroup’s expressions of gratitude to Germany and the Secretary General.

**5(b) Budget Projection for 1996**

**The UK (Chair of the Subgroup on Finance)**

26. noted that the Subgroup had regretted uncertainties about voluntary contributions, especially from the USA. It noted the projected 1996 deficit of SFR 61,000 but added that it was early days yet. The Subgroup noted the Secretary General’s efforts to balance the budget, and that if

the Subgroup should be re-established the Secretary General should be asked to make a full report by 31 July 1996 so that any necessary actions may be taken.

**The USA**

27. explained that the USA shared the Subgroup's regretted uncertainty, as the US Congress has only just approved another temporary measure.
  28. The prospects for the USA's contribution for 1996 being as large as in the past are not good, and the USA must take a position against any proposed increase in the Convention budget at all. Its voluntary contribution will probably be more than if it were paying an obligatory assessment, but it was simply impossible to make any commitment.
  29. The USA urged the Conference to show prudence, since the financial picture is unlikely to improve over the next few years. It encouraged the Parties to prioritize, but not to count on being able to fund lower priority items. The US will willingly interact to help determine priorities.
  30. The USA would not be surprised to see some resolution in the Congressional budget impasse within the next month. The USA regretted the effect of this on the COP's planning for the Convention, but it is unavoidable.
- **Decision 17.6: The Standing Committee expressed concern about the uncertainties regarding voluntary contributions and asked the Secretary General to report by 31 July 1996, assuming that the Subgroup on Finance is re-established.**

**Agenda Item 6:**

**Brisbane Conference Matters**

**6(a): Review of Conference Preparations**

**The Secretary General**

31. said that no action is required under this point, as all preparations seem to be well in hand. Participation should include 91 of our 92 Contracting Parties, plus 31 observer states, over 100 NGOs, and the partners. The Bureau is sponsoring more than 160 delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and Australia is sponsoring still more from the South Pacific; about 200 delegates will receive support, at least 2 delegates from every state that wanted assistance. All STRP candidates are also supported.

**Australia**

32. expressed gratification at finding so many countries present here, especially as it shows a healthy growth of the Convention.

**Hungary (Chair)**

33. expressed thanks to Australia for all its work in preparation.

**6(b) Budget Matters**

**The UK (Chair of the Subgroup on Finance)**

34. reported that the Subgroup regretted that it had insufficient information on the position of countries regarding the budget increase options and the SFR 1000 minimum contribution proposal to make any recommendation at this time. What little information was to hand suggested that the 49% option is not viable, but there was no consensus on the range. The Subgroup asked that the issue should be discussed in regional meetings, after which it will reconvene on 21 March and seek to make a firm recommendation to the Standing Committee and thence to the COP.
35. As to the proposed Development Assistance Officer, without the larger increase the position is unlikely to be funded from core; India has offered to assist the Bureau in seeking funding from outside sources.

**Australia**

36. expressed the hope that the regional meetings would build a consensus.

**Hungary (Chair)**

37. noted that the Standing Committee is mandated to propose an option, following the regional meetings and the Subgroup's reconvening on 21 March, and urged the regional meetings to bear this in mind and to liaise with the other regions, for if representatives arrived at the 21 March Conference Committee meeting with widely diverging views, we would be in trouble. The UK was asked to explain the accruals system of accounting and the 3-year cost-of-living item to the Conference when presenting the Finance and Budget recommendation to the COP.

**The Secretary General**

38. responding to a question, explained that the Senior Policy Adviser's post would need to be cut under the lower budget proposals because, as the second highest salary in the Bureau, it is the only one the cutting of which would make an appreciable difference. The regional Technical Officers cannot be cut without sacrificing the Bureau's mission, and they need support staff. Cutting several support staff to achieve the same savings would put the Bureau below a viable minimum. He had been asked by the SC to spell out the consequences of each option, and the loss of the Senior Policy Adviser position is one of the consequences of the 13% option.

**The UK**

39. noted that the 13% increase option would give the Secretary General less money to work with than is now being spent, according to DOC.6.16 (page 12).

**Germany**

40. clarified that it would give the Bureau less than is now being spent but not less than was budgeted for in Kushiro.
41. It agreed on the need for the SC to give the Conference one clear option, but that will be very hard to do in a one-hour meeting, following only one hour for the Subgroup deliberations. It wondered whether in fact consensus would even be possible.

**Canada**

42. agreed with the method of discussing the matter in regional meetings but emphasized the need for coordination of regional views before the Subgroup meeting on 21 March; it suggested that the Conference Committee keep close track of emerging views through daily reports.

**Switzerland**

43. noted that we must keep in mind countries' budgetary constraints but at the same time we must always remember that Ramsar is a young convention, which needs to grow in order to achieve an adequate level of effectiveness to ensure its important role.

**Hungary (Chair)**

44. drew attention to the document showing the Ramsar budget in relation to the budgets of other conventions--quite small by comparison--and reminded the members to look also at absolute amounts as well as at percentages of increases, which may be needlessly frightening.

**The Secretary General**

45. explained an item in the Subgroup meeting notes, that there was discussion of the impacts of higher and lower budgets on the ability of the Bureau to implement the Strategic Plan, with two opposing views: that the Bureau budget is not so important, the Strategic Plan will succeed or not out in the field, and that the Bureau's role is more central than that. No consensus emerged at the Subgroup meeting.

**Wetlands International**

46. regretted that the Subgroup's discussion, as reflected in the notes, left the impression that there was competition between Wetlands International and the Convention, reflected in the words

“losing momentum to...”, whereas in fact Wetlands International makes an integral contribution to the work of the Convention in all of its own activities.

**The UK**

47. suggested that comparison rather than competition is what had been intended by those remarks.
48. It was agreed that, at the 21 March Subgroup meeting, New Zealand will substitute for Australia, North America will be represented, and the Russian Federation will be present.

**The Senior Policy Adviser**

49. observed that more and more developing countries are joining the Convention these days, precisely the countries that require most assistance from the Bureau. The Strategic Plan means different things to different Parties. To developed nations with resources, the Bureau offers symbolic help with not very much direct drain on resources. Developing countries tend to ask for direct assistance. Often the Bureau can refer them to the partner organizations. But their limited capacity and information often make much greater demands on the Bureau and this will increase as more developing countries are brought in. Thus application of the Strategic Plan is multi-faceted.

**Uruguay**

50. noted that the Neotropics vary a great deal over the region, e.g. all but 2 nations in South America are Parties and the Convention is well established, but only one in the Caribbean is now a member state. The first objective of the Strategic Plan is to recruit more Parties; it is precisely the small countries with problems that will make greater demands on the secretariat. It is a contradiction to make that the first objective and not give the resources to carry it out.

**The Secretary General**

51. hoped that the SFR 1000 minimum annual fee will be reconsidered in the regional meetings as well. There are now 27 states paying the minimum (SFR 223 per year), which barely covers invoices and reminders; they are almost negative contributions when overheads are considered. Several countries do feel unable to pay more, but he urged reconsideration; however politically hard a higher minimum may be, it would be practically very helpful and would show a commitment to the work of the Convention, sending a symbolic message far more valuable than its dollar value.

**Kenya**

52. noted that in Africa, the word “contribution” created a problem, as it suggested a voluntary payment, whereas the word “subscription” was preferred. Kenya sympathized with the Secretary General’s remarks and expressed the intention to bring this up at the regional meeting.

**Hungary (Chair)**

53. observed that the minimum contribution would show solidarity and support, and after all SFR 1000 is not a staggering sum. She invited liaison among regional representatives before the 21 March meeting.

**Australia**

54. reiterated that the SFR 1000 minimum contribution is important; the current minimum does cause problems. A public relations exercise may be necessary to explain why Ramsar dues may be more than other Conventions using the UN scale, but it would be helpful.

**Kenya**

55. wondered whether members could agree to aim in a common direction in the regional meetings, to increase the chances of arriving at a consensus.

**Hungary (Chair)**

56. responded that there was no consensus at that point, and therefore it would be difficult to adopt a common view at the regional meetings.

**The UK**

57. would prefer to aim for the 13-25% increase range, but did not see much common ground.

**Australia**

58. expressed the hope that the COP and these discussions will be an opportunity for a fresh airing of the budget issues. Many Contracting Parties, unjaded by volleys of budget draft documents, will not see the issue in terms of percentage of increases as Standing Committee members do; they will be asking what sort of budget is needed, what is wanted from the Convention after all. It will be helpful to let this fresh discussion take place. Australia understands the political atmosphere, but felt that it will be salutary to let delegates come to the discussion from that angle. It reminded the meeting that we actually have until 25 March in the morning to reach a result, if absolutely necessary. It is clear that some countries have come with fixed instructions, but they can always go back for review of those instructions.

**The USA**

59. wished it to be known that US budgetary constraints should not be construed to mean any diminution of interest in the Convention, nor any reduction of confidence in and support for the Bureau. The USA cannot associate itself with any budgetary increase, for any organization. On the other hand, the USA would not wish to dampen enthusiasm or impede a consensus among the other Contracting Parties, only to convey a sense of what can be expected from the USA. It hoped that the Conference will go beyond "how much" and emphasize priorities. The USA felt that the Bureau's role is very important and hoped that the COP will give clear direction to the Bureau's work and to the Contracting Parties on their goals. The Parties should work together and seek consensus on the most important activities, and hope that sufficient funds will be forthcoming to carry them out.

**India**

60. observed that it has noted an unfortunate slowdown in commitment to movement. While NGOs see a vision and evolve strategies to achieve it, governments, though committed, are now cutting back. Perhaps more unconventional ideas are needed. The Development Assistance Officer would be an important innovation; India hoped that, if the Convention budget will not allow it, the Bureau will seek other funding, and India would like to help with that.

**The Secretary General**

61. offered the clarification that the Development Assistance Officer is not intended to be a fundraiser for the Bureau. He or she would work with bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies to generate more funds for projects in developing countries, without necessarily passing those funds through the Bureau. The Bureau hasn't the capacity to manage projects itself.

**The Senior Policy Adviser**

62. hoped that the regional meetings would not confine their discussions to budgetary matters. They should talk also about the Strategic Plan, about where the Convention is going, and about wetland issues.

**Other Matters:**

**IUCN**

63. thanked the Chair for guiding the Convention through tough spots over the past triennium, with courage and sensitivity, and congratulated the Committee on its appointment of the new Secretary General. IUCN will circulate a 16-page document on its cooperation with the Convention. It promotes the Convention to bi- and multi-lateral agencies, as for example in the recent OECD guidelines of development assistance vis-à-vis wetlands, copies of which are also



available at this meeting. The IUCN-Ramsar relationship is in a healthy state, and HQ technical staff meet regularly. IUCN commended the Secretary General on his commitment and growing understanding, and on the financial discipline he has shown.

**Australia**

64. informed the Standing Committee that announcements of pledges will be made at the Plenary Session on the afternoon of 21 March. Pledging Parties should try to give the secretariat their statements in advance for translation. They will appear in the Proceedings.

**6(c) New Draft Resolutions and Recommendations**

**Hungary (Chair)**

65. noted that in Draft Resolution VI.19's title, "establishment" should be changed to something else, as such an expert group already exists. The UK invites co-sponsors for this resolution.

**Wetlands International**

66. recorded its belief that Annex I, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Statement, can be greatly strengthened by the addition of accepted factual data on wetland loss, and offered to help redraft the document.

**Australia**

67. suggested a need for more intensive work on the Draft Strategic Plan as well, perhaps requiring a subgroup as well.

- **Decision 17.7: A Subgroup was established to bring forward the draft 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Statement, which will consist of the USA and Senegal, Wetlands International, and a member of the Bureau.**

**Hungary (Chair)**

68. wondered whether Draft RES 6.14 should add a point on adopting changes in the structure of the COP as outlined in the Strategic Plan. The Bureau had felt that that was included by the very adoption of the Strategic Plan itself. This can be reviewed later.

**Amendment to the Rules of Procedure**

**The Secretary General**

69. explained that national NGOs now require their government's permission to attend the COP, which seems old-fashioned and out of step with other conventions, e.g., CBD, which admit all NGOs having expertise unless one-third of the Parties object.

**China**

70. encouraged freer participation by NGOs and expressed concern about participation by NGOs from Taiwan, which is a province of China. It suggested a possible need for consultation with the Bureau on this issue in future.

**The USA**

71. pointed out a grammatical mismatch between Rule 2.2.b and the wording of Draft RES VI.15; this wording was borrowed from the Convention on Biological Diversity and should be reworded to conform to the Ramsar Convention.

**BirdLife International**

72. observed that if this change was approved it would require amendment of Rule 2.2(a). Also, they noted that it was fitting, especially in light of Kushiro resolutions, that NGOs be more freely

admitted, but raised the possibility of national NGOs travelling great distances only to find themselves banned by a vote of one-third of member states.

**Canada**

73. observed that any NGO that has one-third of the states opposed to its participation has already made its point.

**Requiring Fuller Information on Sites**

**The UK**

74. expressed sympathy about the problems caused by inadequate site data but questioned whether the Bureau rejecting sites with inadequate data might conflict with the Convention on the point of the Parties' right to designate sites.

**The Secretary General**

75. noted that the Parties decide on sites and should instruct the Bureau to add only those with adequate information. Thus the Bureau would no longer be left to explain why particular sites are on the Ramsar List when it has inadequate data to do so.

**New Zealand**

76. wondered whether, if the main purpose is to encourage Parties to list more sites, this is not a merely bureaucratic requirement. There is no definition of what constitutes adequate data, and funds are lacking to help Parties assemble such data.

**The Secretary General**

77. asked how a Party could judge that a site meets the criteria for designation as a Wetland of International Importance if it does not have minimal data? How can it protect such a site without minimal data? And thus, by implication, is this a serious List after all?

**Australia**

78. expressed fear of inhibiting the identification and listing of sites because of bureaucratic hurdles, but observed that it is true that precision and care are necessary after all. Australia was sure that a good formulation of words can be found and encouraged further discussion.

**Wetlands International**

79. noted that World Heritage has much heavier reporting requirements. The Overview just published shows the value of good information and why it is needed, and also for providing baselines for measuring change in ecological character. Technical assistance can be supplied when necessary. Wetlands International enthusiastically supports this proposal.

**Hungary (Chair)**

80. wondered again about the legal implications of such a change. If a nation's first site should be refused, its accession is also thereby refused, which seems to conflict with Article 2 of the Convention.

**Canada**

81. understood the need for good data but pointed out that point 10 (instructing the Bureau not to accept sites with inadequate data) appeared to be redundant, given points 7 and 8. The key is the definition of "adequate"; sometimes there are no data at all, yet the site must meet the criteria and have a location. "Adequate" should not set too high a standard.

**New Zealand**

82. again feared rejection of site designations and sought a definition of "adequate". There should be no disincentive to listing. A misguided emphasis upon documentation can impede more

important work on the ground. New Zealand would not like to see WCF funds diverted to improving data on Contracting Parties' sites rather than helping prospective new Parties.

**Wetlands International**

83. observed that it is planning to try drafting data sheets in advance in some cases and submitting them to Contracting Parties for their approval.

**WWF**

84. wondered whether it is not the Bureau's responsibility to seek out data on the sites. When a Party informs the Bureau that it has a potential site, should not the Bureau, or Wetlands International, etc., take responsibility for getting the data?

**India**

85. noted that only a fraction of potential sites have been listed; the priority should be upon identifying new sites.

**Hungary (Chair)**

86. expressed the view that Point 10 (rejection of sites) should be dropped and that Wetlands International should be asked to provide guidance on adequacy of maps. A reference to subterranean wetlands should also be included in the preamble, as well as a reference to RES. VI.1 on guidelines on change in ecological character.

**The USA**

87. questioned whether "highest priority" for providing data is really what was meant. It was agreed to drop all mention of orders of priority and merely call for better data.

**Resolution on Financial and Budget Matters**

**New Zealand**

88. expressed concern about the financial implications of having a Subgroup on Finance some of whose members may require assistance for travel and per diem.

**Canada**

89. stated its preference for 5 to 7 members from different regions without mandating that all regions always be represented. It was agreed to prefer "5-7 members" over "7 members".

- **Decision 17.8: Though the budget is not yet ready, the text of the budget resolution was agreed.**
- **Decision 17.9: at Germany's suggestion, the Standing Committee agreed to recommend establishment of a Finance Subgroup with 5-7 members, with the addition of the phrase "from different regions".**

**The Wetland Conservation Award**

**India**

90. expressed the idea that big donors could be approached and the award could be a substantial one, properly done.

**Canada**

91. offered as an alternative the idea of offering many less expensive awards; if that option were to remain open, it might be better to change the wording to allow for many instead of one per triennium.

**Australia**

92. found the award to be an important idea but inclined to India's preference for a more significant one. More thought should be given to this, however, and Australia suggested that the resolution accept the idea of an award "in principle" and task the Standing Committee with investigating its feasibility.

- **Decision 17.10: The Resolution will ask the Conference to decide firmly to establish the "Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award" and ask the Standing Committee to carry it out for the 1999 COP or otherwise explain its progress in implementation.**

**Hungary (Chair)**

93. again pointed out that "establishment" is not the right word, this time in REC. 6.10 on an expert group on economic evaluation, as the group already exists. It was agreed to change the title.

**6(e) Nominations for Conference Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons**

- **Decision 17.11: The Standing Committee nominated as Chairperson of the Conference Dr. Peter Bridgewater of Australia, by acclamation.**
- **Decision 17.12: The Committee agreed to nominate Guatemala and Chad as Vice Chairs.**

**Nominations for the Credentials Committee.** The Standing Committee at its 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting strongly wished for credentials to be signed by the Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, or Head of State of each Government.

- **Decision 17.13: It was agreed that Australia, Bulgaria, China, Norway, Uganda, and the USA will be asked to serve on the Credentials Committee. A decision about the member representing the Neotropical Region should be made tomorrow.**

94. It was agreed that henceforward the Standing Committee becomes the Conference Committee, and the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee thus becomes a subgroup of the Conference Committee.

**The Secretary General**

95. expressed appreciation to the Government of the Netherlands, Wetlands International, and particularly Scott Frazier individually, for the excellent *Overview of World Ramsar Sites* now available to the delegates. The Bureau has had ample experience of how hard Mr Frazier has worked to bring this estimable project to fruition.

**Wetlands International**

96. formally announced the establishment of Wetlands International, created out of the former IWRB, AWB, and Wetlands for the Americas.

**Switzerland**

97. announced that a photographic exhibition on mires in Switzerland is on display here; the members were invited to a presentation when the time has been determined.

**Japan**

98. announced the publication of *Asia-Pacific Waterbirds Strategy*, of which some copies are available at the Conference.

**The Secretary General**

99. announced that copies of the new Ramsar flyer are available in English, French, and Spanish. It is the first of a series of publications funded by the Government of Japan as part of its contribution to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Thanks are due to the Government of Japan.

**Closing Remarks of the Chairperson**

100. The Chairperson judged that she has seen much progress over the past three years, and expressed her gratitude to the other members for all for their help and their confidence.

**The Conference Committee will meet the following day, Tuesday, 19 March 1996, at 10 a.m.**

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