

## CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee  
Gland, Switzerland, 29 October - 1 November 1996

### Summary of Decisions taken at the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

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#### Convention finances

- Decision 19.1: The Subgroup on Finance's report on the 1996 projected budget, which shows projected income of Swiss francs 2,418,458, and projected expenditure of SFR 2,413,040, for a balance of income over expenditure of Sfr 5,418, was accepted by consensus.

#### Ramsar Small Grants Fund project proposals:

- Decision 19.2: The 15 proposed projects in Groups 1 and 2, proposed by Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Kenya, Mali, Pakistan, Philippines, Suriname, Togo, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uzbekistan, totalling SFR 502,150, were approved for funding. The Bureau will follow up on the six Group 2 proposals requiring further refinement before disbursement of funds. Twelve proposals were not recommended for approval because of problems with the project design or other factors. A balance of approximately SFR 382,000 will be carried over for next year's project proposals.

#### Operational Guidelines for administration of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund

- Decisions 19.3 and 19.4: The Committee approved new Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund, in which the primary focus for suitability for approval is upon proposals which help to implement the Operational Objectives of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002.
- Decision 19.5: The Subgroup on Finance was designated to work with the Secretary General on fundraising for the Small Grants Fund.

#### 1997 Bureau Business Plan and Budget

- Decisions 19.6 and 19.21: The Bureau was instructed to complete allocations of time and staff responsibilities for the revised Bureau work plan for 1997, which has been rearranged in an easier-to-read table form, and submit the plan to the Chair of the Standing Committee for approval on behalf of the Committee.
- Decision 19.7: The proposed 1997 Budget, which was amended to include SFR 70,000 for the Reserve Fund, and which now shows a projected income of SFR 2,940,988, projected expenditures of SFR 2,857,839, and a projected balance of income over expenditure of SFR 83,149, was approved by consensus.
- Decision 19.8: "Acknowledging the extensive and successful efforts made by the Bureau, and in particular the Secretary General, for bringing the Ramsar budget to a position of a surplus balance, the Standing Committee at its 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Secretary General and his colleagues in the Ramsar Bureau."

#### Communications activities

The Conservatoire du Littoral (France) submitted a proposal for the creation of an outposted Ramsar Convention communications and training programme in a building owned by the Conservatoire in Evian, France, in which it is envisaged that, after alterations to the facilities funded by Evian and the Conservatoire,

the Convention's communications and publications budget of approximately SFR 300,000 would be matched by private donations, thus increasing the Convention's capacities in these fields.

- **Decisions 19.9 and 19.27:** The Conservatoire du Littoral (France) was invited to continue the development of its feasibility study for the Evian initiative, and to report to the next Standing Committee meeting.

#### World Wetland Week

- **Decision 19.10:** It was agreed that 2 February should be recognized as World Wetland Day. Contracting Parties may have week-long celebrations if they wish, but each CP is urged to celebrate 2 February as World Wetland Day, effective from 1997. The Bureau, time and resources permitting, should work towards designation of 2 February as World Wetland Day by the United Nations. The awareness materials for the above celebration should address the benefits of wetlands for the human population. Wetlands International's Specialist Group on Education and Public Awareness will take the lead (in consultation with other partners), by the end of November 1996, in advising the Bureau on potential activities that could be undertaken on 2 February 1997, and the Bureau will in turn advise the Parties. Further, in line with Resolution VI.19, Wetlands International's Specialist Group on EPA will prepare a broader paper on Education/Public Awareness needs for enhancing wetland conservation for the next Standing Committee meeting. A study group composed of Costa Rica, Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and Wetlands International was formed to report back to the Standing Committee.

#### Personnel and administrative matters

- **Decision 19.11:** The Standing Committee agreed to the creation of an additional technical post for the Bureau to be funded fully through voluntary contributions from the Contracting Parties in Europe for the purpose of assisting the Bureau in meeting its increased commitments, especially in programme management and resource development, in support of the implementation of the Convention. This position will also enable the Bureau to work actively with major institutions in Europe.

The USA offered a complementary proposal to the effect that an **internship programme** be initiated with the dual purpose of providing support for the Technical Officers and providing training opportunities for students from the regions, and offered to contribute funding support to this programme. The USA committed funds for an intern to assist the Neotropics' Technical Officer and a further contribution for another intern for other regions.

Senior Policy Advisor Michael Smart informed the Standing Committee that he would be leaving the Bureau sometime during 1997 in order to pursue more field-based work. The following statement was adopted by the Standing Committee:

- **Decision 19.12:** The Standing Committee pays tribute to the commitment and dedication of Mike Smart throughout his long service to the Ramsar Convention. The Committee expresses its thanks and high esteem for his invaluable help and effort in the recognition of wetland values, in the development of the Convention's mechanisms, and in the enhancement of wetland conservation and wise use. The Committee wishes success and good health to Mr Smart in his future activities and urges the Bureau to find ways and means to involve him in the Convention's ongoing work.
- **Decision 19.13:** The renewal of the contract for Mr Delmar Blasco as Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention for the period 1 August 1997 to 31 July 2000 has been recommended for approval by the IUCN Director General.

#### STRP Report and Work Plan

- **Decision 19.14:** The draft work plan of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel was **approved**, covering the areas of 1) toxic chemicals, 2) economic evaluation, 3) restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands, 4) education and public awareness, 5) ecological character, 6) the Montreux Record and the Management Guidance Procedure, 7) management planning, 8) the Ramsar Database,

9) global review of wetland resources, 10) criteria for identification of wetlands of international importance, 11) the relationship between the STRP and the subsidiary scientific bodies of other institutions, and 12) the Small Grants Fund.

#### Review of conservation and wise use issues

Wetlands International (M. Moser) made a presentation on key activities carried out for the Convention by Wetlands International and sought the Committee's direction on several points.

- **Decision 19.15:** There should be no "telephone book" hard-copy publication of the traditional *Directory of Wetlands of International Importance* for the next COP, but the Directory data will be made available on diskette. The *Overview of the World's Wetland Sites*, however, should be updated for the next COP. Ramsar Information Sheets should be circulated in mid-1997 for updating the data in existing Ramsar sites with a one-year timetable.

#### Notification of change in ecological character

The Bureau sought guidance on how to improve implementation of article 3.2 of the Convention on notification of change in ecological character of sites and Resolution VI.17 on individual sites.

- **Decision 19.16:** The Bureau should contact Contracting Parties and follow up on steps taken to address problems of change in the ecological character of sites, and should urge further necessary action and offer its assistance.

#### The Management Guidance Procedure

- **Decision 19.17:** The Standing Committee decided that the Bureau should take a proactive approach in the use of the Management Guidance Procedure.

#### Signage at Ramsar sites

- **Decision 19.18:** The Contracting Parties should endeavor to place descriptive signs at all Ramsar sites, and these signs should include the Ramsar logo, as well as the following suggested text as amended to meet particular circumstances:

THIS SITE, COVERING XXX HECTARES, HAS BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR INCLUSION IN THE **LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE** ESTABLISHED UNDER THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS, THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY SIGNED IN RAMSAR (IRAN) IN 1971 TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF WETLAND AREAS WORLDWIDE.

The protection and management of this site is under the responsibility of: (name and address, including telephone and fax numbers, of the appropriate agency)

Variation for countries with a federal system: ON THE PROPOSAL OF (NAME OF THE STATE/ PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT), THIS SITE, COVERING XXX HECTARES, HAS BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ....

#### Establishment of a Mediterranean Wetlands Committee

- **Decisions 19.19:** The Standing Committee endorsed the statement on the Bureau's association with the proposed Mediterranean Wetlands Committee, as shown in the box below.

Proposal for a <b>MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS COMMITTEE</b> (under the aegis of the Ramsar Convention Bureau) <b>Character</b> Advisory/Consultative, but action-oriented
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<p>Non-exclusive, open to Governments, NGOs, the private sector and technical/scientific institutes</p> <p>Endorsed by Ramsar Standing Committee</p> <p>Operate through flexible project groups, established as the need arises</p> <p>Criteria should be established to ensure a practical and pragmatic approach to Committee membership (number and representation) and frequency of meetings.</p> <p><b>Objective and Functions</b></p> <p><u>To provide guidance</u> to all interested parties, and in particular to the Ramsar Bureau and the MedWet Coordinator and Secretariat, on practical measures and actions for implementation of the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proposing international actions on Mediterranean wetland issues;</li> <li>providing endorsement and support, as requested, for national wetland initiatives;</li> <li>promoting increased financial support for the conservation and sustainable use of Mediterranean wetlands.</li> </ul>
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#### Bureau membership in the World Water Council and Global Water Partnership

- **Decision 19.20:** There was not enough support for Bureau membership in the World Water Council and Global Water Partnership, and the Bureau is urged to pursue some different kind of relationship besides membership and report to the next meeting of the Standing Committee on further talks with these groups.

#### Application from Friends of the Earth International for Ramsar partner status

Friends of the Earth International requested the status of partner organization to the Convention.

- **Decision 19.22:** The Bureau should inquire further into FOE's request and obtain more information about FOE itself for the Committee's examination at its next meeting. It should also investigate other potential partners and bring a list of such possibilities to the next meeting for consideration.

#### Follow-up on Conference Resolutions

##### The Rio+5 process

- **Decision 19.23:** The Bureau is requested to contact the Administrative Authorities and formally ask them to approach their governments' authorities dealing with the evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21 and other decisions of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), and call attention to Ramsar achievements, encouraging them to make the Convention's voice heard, particularly in view of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly to be devoted to this issue (June 1997).

#### Compilation of Conference decisions

- **Decision 19.24:** The Bureau should begin work on a compendium or compilation of all decisions taken at the six meetings of the Conference of the Parties held so far, organized by the themes of the Strategic Plan.

#### Wetland Conservation Award

The Secretary General invited clarification on the nature of the Wetland Conservation Award and its terms of reference. Canada offered to draft ideas for circulation soon and devise general recommendations for national Ramsar awards as well.

- **Decision 19.25:** Terms of reference for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award will be prepared for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 1997 meeting.

### Study of Convention cost-cutting and possible relocation of the Bureau

- **Decision 19.26:** The Standing Committee decided to establish a Subgroup to address the issue of a possible relocation of the Ramsar Bureau, composed of Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand if agreeable, Panama, Switzerland and IUCN, to work by correspondence and study the question as outlined in Canada's proposed process and report to the next Standing Committee meeting.

The Subgroup on Possible Relocation should focus on the terms of reference proposed by Canada:

1. Examine all relevant advice from IUCN, CPs, the Swiss government, the Bureau
2. Analyze the economic/budget benefits and disadvantages
3. Document staff and programme benefits and disadvantages
4. Identify political and legal implications
5. Address IUCN's suggestions regarding limitation to locations with existing IUCN presence
6. Study the processes by which Wetlands International and Desertification relocated and CBD and Climate Change chose locations
7. Seek independent advice to craft recommendations for the SC
8. Make recommendations about the process for carry the matter forward, if appropriate

The Standing Committee was invited to follow a two-step process proposed by Iran. Step 1: the Subgroup on Relocation would study whether the Bureau should relocate, as no one seems so far to be convinced that this would be a good idea. Step 2: If yes, the Bureau should develop criteria for selection of a new location to be considered by the Standing Committee at its 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> meetings.

### Comments on OECD Guidelines

- **Decisions 19.28:** The Contracting Parties should be asked to forward their comments to the Bureau by 30 April 1997 concerning the OECD Guidelines for aid agencies for improved conservation and sustainable use of tropical and subtropical wetlands.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

- **Decision 19.30:** The 7<sup>th</sup> COP will take place in May 1999; it's agreed to leave the exact dates to Costa Rica and the Bureau to determine. The length of the COP should be the same as at Brisbane: eight working days over nine. A Subgroup on COP Preparations was established to assist Costa Rica, consisting of Costa Rica, Australia, Iran, the Netherlands (if agreeable), Senegal, and the USA.
- **Decision 19.31:** The general theme for the 7th COP should be centered around the concept of "Wetlands and People", including local community empowerment, training, education and public awareness themes. The Subgroup on the COP will refine this theme by January and circulate proposals to the SC members for adoption, so that promotional activities can get underway.

### Next Meeting of the Standing Committee

- **Decision 19.32:** The 20<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting should be held in Gland, Switzerland, during the week of 29 September to 2 October, with the first day reserved for the meetings of the Subgroup on Finance and any other subgroups as appropriate.

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