

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 December 2001**

**DOC. SC26-27 Addendum
Revision 1**

Agenda item 12.3 (k)

Report of the Standing Committee Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

1. Paragraph 12 of the Report of the Standing Committee Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (DOC. SC26-27), concerns a recommendation to establish a Subgroup, to work intersessionally, to examine options for strengthening and formalising the role of Wetlands International and other International Organization Partners of the Convention in supporting the work of the STRP.
2. The attached draft Terms of Reference for such a Subgroup have been prepared by Wetlands International in consultation with the Convention's other International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN and WWF) and Canada, for consideration by the Standing Committee.
3. The Standing Committee may wish to consider how it should receive the report on these matters from the Subgroup.

[DRAFT]

Ramsar Standing Committee's Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Review of scientific support and synergies amongst partners to improve core science foundation support to the STRP and the Ramsar Convention – background and Terms of Reference

Background: scientific capacity available to the Ramsar Convention

1. The STRP has received support since its inception from the scientific and technical advice made available through the International Organization Partners (IOPs), IUCN-The World Conservation Union, BirdLife International, WWF and Wetlands International.
2. Each IOP and a number of other organizations (including organizations invited as observers to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel) maintain scientific networks, which are made up of many volunteers and professional scientists working for agencies and institutes. However, even though a considerable range of expertise exists, it is not always readily available (e.g., hydrology, water balance, agriculture) for supporting the Convention.
3. Wetlands International coordinates 21 Specialist Groups, of which the 15 waterbird taxa Groups are recognised also by IUCN-Species Survival Commission and BirdLife, with the remainder being thematically-based. IUCN-SSC administers a further 102 Specialist Groups, while BirdLife International can access many Species Action Plan-based experts. The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) also has working groups (e.g., on marine Protected Areas) of relevance to Ramsar.
4. In addition to the IOPs, there are many organizations and networks that are capable of providing additional support to the Convention, for example International Water Management Institute (IWMI), ICLARM -The World Fish Centre, etc. There is therefore a large range of expertise that is available from the scientific community at international level, some of which is drawn upon already.
5. Ramsar Contracting Parties have been requested to establish a National Focal Point for the STRP to provide input to and support for the work of the STRP. To date, 66 Parties have appointed an STRP National Focal Point. So as to better identify and make available their skills and expertise to the work of the STRP, it is intended to request National Focal Points to complete a short skills questionnaire.
6. At national level, there are many scientific and technical networks and resources that can be made available through STRP national focal points. This resource is generally not yet readily available to the work of STRP.
7. Furthermore, the Ramsar Bureau has established a Wetland Experts Database in order to assist in identifying national experts on different aspects of wetlands.

8. At the meeting of the Wetlands International Board of Members, 29 November - 2 December 2001, an opening Statement was made by the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, and which called for a new and reinforced partnership with the Convention.
9. This matter was further discussed by the Standing Committee Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel during the 26th Meeting of the Standing Committee 3-7 December 2001. The Standing Committee accepted (Decision SC26-29) the recommendation of the Subgroup (DOC. SC26-27 Addendum) that it should undertake a review of the STRP's links with other science networks. The Subgroup will work intersessionally to examine options for strengthening and formalising the role of Wetlands International and other International Organization Partners of the Convention in supporting the work of the STRP.
10. The following Terms of Reference were approved by Decision SC26-29. Subsequently the Subgroup met briefly (on 7 December 2001) so as to further establish the procedure and timelines for undertaking its review. The process agreed is outlined in Annex 1.

Terms of Reference

11. The Standing Committee Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the STRP is requested to review and make recommendations on developing the scientific support and synergies amongst Ramsar partners so as to improve core science foundation support to the STRP and the Ramsar Convention.
12. The review should take into account the capacity and expert networks outlined in paragraphs 1. to 7. above and make recommendations to the Standing Committee concerning:
 - a) whether an improved institutional arrangement between Wetlands International and the Convention would more effectively deliver work in support of the Convention;
 - b) if so, what should be the institutional arrangements and what are the benefits and opportunities that will derive from such arrangements;
 - c) whether amended arrangements along comparable lines with any other organizations would be similarly beneficial.
 - d) costed options, identifying the financial issues concerned;
 - e) how better coordination of Specialist Group involvement from Wetlands International and other IOPs could be achieved, and gaps in areas of expertise that should be filled; and
 - f) ways of improving engagement with national STRP Focal Points and augmenting their capacity, to enable better access for STRP to national expert networks.
13. The Subgroup will work using electronic communications and meet through teleconferences as required. To facilitate the work of the Subgroup the Ramsar Bureau will establish an electronic discussion group (list-server) for the Subgroup's members and

observers. If possible, members of the Subgroup will meet to finalise its recommendations immediately prior to the meetings of the Subgroups on Finance and on COP8 in May 2002.

14. The Subgroup will be provided by the IOPs of the Ramsar Convention with all necessary information it requires to undertake its work.
15. Wetlands International will, with the approval of the Subgroup, seek views from institutions with which the Ramsar Bureau has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and other relevant international bodies (e.g., Bonn Convention Scientific Council, IWMI, ICLARM, UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme) concerning the issues it will address, as listed in paragraph 10. above. This will be achieved through circulation for consultation of the review paper prepared by the Subgroup.
16. On the basis of its review paper and consultation comments received, the Subgroup will report its recommendations to the Standing Committee Subgroups on Finance and COP8 at their meetings in May 2002, so that the relevant strategic and resource implications may be considered before COP8 for potential consideration by COP8.
17. The recommendations made by the Subgroup should also identify where, should the recommendations be accepted, amendments would need to be made to the revised *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel as approved by the 26th meeting of the Standing Committee for finalization for COP8.
18. The membership of the Subgroup is: Uganda (Chair), Argentina, Armenia, France, Japan, Trinidad & Tobago, BirdLife International, the Chair of STRP, and Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA as Observers, the Deputy Secretary General (*ex officio*) and with the assistance of IUCN, Wetlands International and WWF.

Annex 1: process and timelines

19. Wetlands International will, with the assistance of the IOPs, prepare a draft review paper, for review by the Chair of the Subgroup assisted by the Chair of STRP and the Bureau, by 15 February 2002.
20. Subject to the approval of the Chair of the Subgroup, the review paper will be circulated electronically to all Subgroup members and observers, with a deadline for response of 7 March 2002.
21. At the same time Wetlands International will, with the approval of the Chair of the Subgroup, seek views on the review paper from institutions with which the Ramsar Bureau has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation and other relevant international bodies.
22. By 25 March 2002 and on the basis of comments received, Wetlands International will, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau, prepare draft recommendations for consideration by the Subgroups on Finance and on COP8 at their meetings in May 2002.

23. If feasible, members and observers of the Subgroup will meet immediately prior to the meetings of the Subgroups on Finance and on COP8 in May 2002 so as to review their recommendations.