

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC26-27 Addendum

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 Organisation 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 Organisation 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 TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

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

Background: Scientific capacity available to the Convention

1. The STRP has received support since its inception from the scientific and technical advice made available through the International Organisation Partners, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, BirdLife International, WWF and Wetlands International.
2. Each IOP and a number of other organisations (including existing Ramsar Observers) 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 may not be readily available (e.g. hydrology, water balance, agriculture) for support to the Convention.
3. In the case of Wetlands International, 21 Specialist Groups are linked, including 15 waterbird taxa Groups recognised 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. Outside the IOPs, there are many organisations 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. At national level, there are many scientific and technical networks and resources that can be made available through STRP national focal points. This resource has not generally been made readily available to the work of STRP.
6. At the meeting of the Wetlands International Board of Members, 29 November –2 December 2001, an opening Statement was presented to the Meeting by the Secretary General of the Convention, which called for a new and reinforced partnership with the Convention.
7. This matter was further discussed by the Standing Committee Subgroup on the *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (DOC. SC26-27), who have recommended to the Standing Committee the establishment of a Subgroup, to work intersessionally, to examine options for strengthening and formalising the role of Wetlands International and other International Organisation Partners of the Convention in supporting the work of the STRP.

Proposed tasks of the Sub-Group

8. The Standing Committee Sub-Group on the *modus operandi* of the STRP is requested to review the availability of scientific support to Ramsar STRP and Bureau, and the potential synergies that could result from a closer working relationship with the scientific organisations and networks, including Specialist Groups of Wetlands International and the groups under a number of IUCN Commissions.
9. The review should take into account the capacity outlined in paragraphs 2. to 5. 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; and
 - b). If so, what should be the institutional arrangements and what are the benefits and opportunities that will derive from such arrangements;
 - c). 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;
 - d) Ways of improving engagement with national STRP Focal Points and augmenting their capacity, to enable better access for STRP to national expert networks;
 - e) Whether amended arrangements along comparable lines with any other organisations would be similarly beneficial; and
 - f). Costed options, identifying the financial issues concerned.
10. The Sub-Group should meet according to need, and should use electronic communications whenever possible.
11. The Sub-Group will be provided by the IOPs of the Ramsar Convention with all necessary information it requires to undertake its work.
12. Wetlands International will, with the approval of the Sub-Group, seek views from key relevant international bodies (e.g. Bonn Convention Scientific Committee, IWMI, ICLARM, CBD-SBSTTA, UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme, Society of Wetland Scientists), concerning the issues it will address, as listed in paragraph 9. above.
13. The Sub-Group will report its recommendations to the Standing Committee, so that the relevant strategic and resource implications may be considered before COP8, for potential consideration by COP8.
14. The membership of the Subgroup will be established by the Standing Committee.