

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
40th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 11-15 May 2009

Report of the 40th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Day One, 13 May 2009

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

- The SC Chair, Dr Kim Chan-woo, Republic of Korea**, expressed his gratitude for the unsparing support provided by the Parties for the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, hosted by Korea six months earlier, and expressed his appreciation for having been given the opportunity to contribute further to the implementation of the COP10 Resolutions as Chair of the Standing Committee. He said that the COP had provided Korea with great momentum in raising public awareness of the environment and wetlands and to stand out in the international community for its national vision of “Low Carbon Green Growth”, noting that Korean schools are increasingly paying more attention to wetlands. He felt that it was important not to lose that momentum. He outlined the issues to be dealt with in the course of this SC meeting.
- Mark Smith, representing the Director General of IUCN**, welcomed the participants to the IUCN headquarters. He apologized for the construction underway and promised that for the next SC meeting the participants would be able to enter through the front door of a gleaming new facility. He noted that COP10 fell between the IUCN World Conservation Congress and the recent 5th World Water Forum and said that both events laid out challenges and opportunities for wetlands and their wise use. A new generation of investment in water infrastructure development is accelerating, and wetlands must find a place in this as the essential natural infrastructure. He noted the Ramsar Resolutions that equip the Parties but said that the great challenge is now in implementing them. He said that examples from around the world should guide the Parties, including IUCN’s Water and Nature Initiative, and he observed that IUCN is looking for ways to work with the Parties to help in putting those to use.
- The Secretary General (SG)** welcomed the new members and expressed his gratitude to all of the Parties for their commitment, to Switzerland for hosting the Secretariat and IUCN for administering the Secretariat’s functions, to the Republic of Korea for hosting COP10 and to Romania for offering to host COP11, to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the International Organization Partners (IOPs) for their work, to Australia and Chile for co-chairing the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform, and to the Secretariat staff for their commitment to serving the Parties through teamwork. Among challenges, he drew attention to the need for support from all Parties, IOPs, and other partners; to the STRP’s need for financial support; to the Parties’ need to use Regional Initiatives to enhance international cooperation; to the need for payment of contributions and for voluntary funding; and to the need to reach out to other stakeholders, like cities, academics, parliamentarians, magistrates, journalists, tourism groups, and groups such as extractive industries.

4. **Leon Bennun, BirdLife International, representing the IOPs**, noted that, in a time of economic recession, decision-makers are distracted and preoccupied and funds are scarce; the conservation and wise use of wetlands might be pushed to the political periphery. But he noted that a slowdown in development might provide a breathing space, and he encouraged Parties to grasp that opportunity to move forward on sound wetland management planning and ecosystem-based policy development. He drew attention to the importance for wetlands of the upcoming COPs of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions, and he urged the Ramsar delegates to reinforce the Ramsar objectives with their colleagues dealing with the UNFCCC and CBD. He noted that the 2010 target for biodiversity will not be met and added that Ramsar Contracting Parties need to redouble their efforts to meet the Convention's own target of 2,500 Ramsar sites covering 250 million hectares by 2015. Beyond site designations, it is essential to put more effort into management of sites, as well as monitoring and evaluation of existing management plans. He noted that a unique feature of Ramsar is the partnership with the IOPs, who support and contribute in a wide variety of ways, but he urged that the partnership could do a great deal more, citing the Wings Over Wetlands project as an example of fruitful collaboration. He felt that the Secretariat's partnership review could help to maximize the potential of the existing relationships and encourage new partnerships if they are well-targeted. (All of the Opening Statements are available on the Ramsar Web site.)
5. **The Chair**, on behalf of the Republic of Korea, thanked the Parties for helping to make COP10 an environmentally friendly event by contributing to the Carbon Offset Fund. This effort produced US\$ 10,000, which will be used by the Secretariat to support wetland projects. In addition, Korea committed at COP10 to contribute US\$ 100,000 to the Small Grants Fund (slightly less because of exchange rate losses, but to be supplemented next year), to be used to support two projects from the 2008 SGF portfolio.
6. **The USA** announced that it is prepared to contribute US\$ 100,000 to support the Americas regional team in the Secretariat's work with Latin America.
7. **The SG** took the opportunity to thank a number of Contracting Parties and organizations for their financial contributions to the Small Grants Fund and other Ramsar projects: Austria, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA, Danone Group, Institut de l'Environnement et de l'Energie de la Francophonie (IEPF), and UNEP.
8. **The SC Chair** presented to Uganda the Ramsar site certificate for the newly-designated Rwenzori Mountains Ramsar Site.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

9. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** requested that Agenda item 8 on Regional Initiatives be put back a day or so to permit the participation of the director of the Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA), who has been delayed. **The Deputy Secretary General (DSG)** felt that, given the complexity of the issue, it would be important to begin discussion as early as possible, as in the proposed agenda, though the SC may decide to continue the discussion further. He noted that it would be good to have all representatives present to enrich the discussion, but the key is that the SC members need to accomplish their work in good time.

10. **Lebanon** felt, as an SC member, that it would be helpful in forming views to wait for the arrival of the director of RRC-CWA. **The DSG** reiterated that the Secretariat's advice would be to begin the Agenda item as scheduled, in order to ensure a level playing field for all proposed Regional Initiatives, as changing the agenda for one observer would introduce complication.
11. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** did not wish to hamper the work of the Committee and understood the need to take up the issue earlier, but he requested some flexibility in deferring the conclusion of the issue until the director could be present. **The Chair** noted that this was discussed in earlier meetings of the Management Working Group (MWG) and Subgroup on Finance, and he foresaw that it would be time-consuming for the SC plenary; thus he urged that the Agenda item be taken up as planned today, with the possibility that the discussion could continue tomorrow.
12. **Uganda** requested that time be left at the close of today's session for a 7-minute video on the Rwenzori Mountains, which shows the changes wrought by climate change.
13. The agenda, with Uganda's addition, was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

14. **The DSG** explained that there are four categories of observers that are formally recognized as admitted: 1) Parties that are not members of the Standing Committee, of which 20 are present; 2) countries that are not yet Parties, of which there are none present; 3) the permanent observers, Netherlands and Switzerland and the five IOPs (IWMI has sent apologies); and 4) the Chair of the STRP.
15. **The Chair** invited the SC to admit the additional observers: the representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research in Central and West Asia. These observers were admitted by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Briefing on roles and responsibilities of SC Chairs and members

16. **The DSG** alluded to DOC. SC40-4 and made a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the roles of the SC members and the SC Chair, and he suggested that the SC might wish to instruct the Secretariat to develop a similar briefing on the roles of the Vice-Chair of the SC and the Chairs of the SC's Subgroups. He noted that the SC might also wish to consider updating the core document, Resolution VII.1 (1999), for consideration by COP11 in 2012.
17. **Brazil** suggested that para. 7 of SC40-4, concerning the possibility of closed sessions, does not provide transparency and is not in line with Resolution VII.1, and he urged that it be deleted. **The DSG** noted that the COP Rules of Procedure provide for the COP and any of its subsidiary bodies going into closed session when those bodies decide to do so (Rules 29.1, 29.2), and he recalled that the COP Rules apply to the Standing Committee unless a formal decision has been made otherwise on specific matters. There have been precedents for closed sessions of the SC, for example, when discussing Secretary General matters, but in general that should always be seen as a last resort.

18. **Lebanon** observed that the Regional Representatives of the SC are expected to maintain contacts with the Parties in their regions but pointed out that it is not possible for Lebanon to maintain contacts with Israel. He urged that Israel should be assigned to a different region. **The DSG** recognized that political tensions often make matters difficult, in other regions as well, and he recalled the COP7 (1999) discussions of this issue in which it was concluded that Israel, as lying on a regional border, could participate in either the Asia or the Europe region.
19. **The Netherlands** raised the question of the difference in roles between the SC's Permanent Observers and the other observers to individual meetings. **The DSG** replied that through oversight that has not been thought out and needs to be considered carefully and articulated, and he proposed that that will be done. **Switzerland** recalled that historically the Permanent Observers have been considered to be very close to SC members, though non-voting, and as such they have not been considered to be eligible to be elected as regular Regional Representatives on the Committee; he pointed out that this paradox needs to be resolved.
20. **Uganda** urged that there needs to be a more detailed and formal articulation of the role and responsibilities of the Management Working Group as well. He also noted that there is mention (in para. 12) of the members' responsibility for canvassing Parties' opinions on agenda issues before SC meetings, but felt that reporting back to them on meeting outcomes is equally important.
21. **Switzerland** pointed out that the numbers of SC observers has been steadily increasing and that raises the question of whether the work of the Committee might not be impeded with so many participants. There is the possibility of longer meetings, more discussion, consensus more difficult to be reached. He felt, without advocating either view, that the SC should consider whether to continue growing into a "mini-COP" or be more restricted and thus more manageable.
22. **The DSG** sensed that the SC found the briefing useful but that there are gaps in it. He noted that the MWG's roles are defined in Resolution IX.24 (as amended by Resolution X.4). He agreed that the issue of Permanent Observers must be resolved and suggested that the SC request the Secretariat and interested parties to discuss the issue. He agreed that increasing numbers of observers is generally a good thing but a balance must be found in order to avoid over-complication. He felt that it was important that the Parties work through their Regional Representatives on the SC and that everyone needs to be disciplined in ensuring that their contributions do not prolong matters unduly.
23. **Argentina** noted that developing countries consider the participation of observers to be very important, as important issues are being addressed. There is no wish to slow down the making of decisions. She noted that the document's listing of Administrative Authorities' contacts needs to be updated.
24. **South Africa** asked for flexibility in striking a balance on the role of observers, noting that many SC members might not have the capacity to participate fully and follow up on outcomes; observers could fill a role in that and can add value to many of the challenges facing the Convention.

25. **Cameroon** suggested that UNEP should be given Permanent Observer status as well. **The DSG** indicated that that would require a COP decision but suggested that the SC ask for further clarification of the role of Permanent Observers, as well as of the Vice-Chair and the Subgroup Chairs, with a recommendation for SC41's consideration.
26. **The DSG** explained that the assignment of Parties in the regions to respective Regional Representatives was just a suggestion, and he asked each regional group to consider those assignments afresh and inform the Secretariat of their choices.
27. **The USA** suggested forming a working group to report back tomorrow in order to avoid a long discussion of this issue. He noted that considering UNEP as a Permanent Observer would be bound up with the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform and cannot be resolved at this meeting. **The DSG** cautioned against forming too many working groups, as there may not be time or place for meetings, and urged informal consultations instead.
28. **Brazil** said that, concerning closed sessions, the analogy with the COP Rules does not apply, since all Parties are present at the COP. There is no need for closed sessions, as there can be informal discussions outside of the meetings if necessary. He urged again that para. 7 should be deleted. **The DSG** noted that the Rules of Procedure do apply to the SC unless specifically excepted, and Resolution VII.1 on the Standing Committee explicitly specifies voting members. All such bodies have the option to go into closed session when the President or Chair deems it necessary.
29. **The Chair** summarized that the Annex to SC40-4 needs modification and asked the participants to inform the Secretariat of their updates during this meeting. Concerning closed sessions, he felt that the Secretariat gave a clear legal explanation, and he suggested informal consultations to discuss the matter of Permanent Observers. He invited the USA to lead the consultations on the roles of observers. **Brazil** sought clarification that the consultations would include the issue of closed sessions, and **the Chair** agreed.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Secretary General

30. **The SG** made a PowerPoint presentation intended to update his report in DOC. SC40-5 and emphasize certain important themes. He drew attention to a large number of initiatives and outcomes concerning the wise use of wetlands, Ramsar sites, international cooperation, and the Convention's capacities. He noted that many of the recent accomplishments highlight the growing need for more capacity in the Secretariat to meet the challenges of more activities and more partnerships. He enumerated a number of issues that the Secretariat is focusing on in particular, including the Changwon Declaration and Strategic Plan, river basin management, human health, climate change, urbanization, extractive industries, eradication of poverty, and partnerships, and he invited the Parties to inform the Secretariat of all of their Ramsar-related achievements so that they can be publicized and offered as examples to other Parties. He urged the Parties to take the lead on specific issues, leading ad hoc working groups, for example, and organizing seminars. (The Secretary General's presentation is available on the Ramsar Web site.)
31. **The Marshall Islands** made an intervention concerning Australia and information that was provided to the Secretariat about a Ramsar site in 2007 and 2008. **The SG** offered to

- discuss the matter informally in order to understand better what is involved and help if possible.
32. **Cameroon** expressed the view that in Central Africa there are serious difficulties with the IOPs – he noted that the Secretariat works with the Parties according to their own priorities, but the IOPs do not bear these in mind. He asked the Secretariat to play the role of an interface between the Parties and the IOPs, and urged that the IOPs should support the governments and work with them before going to the Secretariat.
 33. **The SG** suggested that matters of miscommunication were at fault, and he explained the Secretariat's procedures when receiving information from all kinds of groups, not just the IOPs. Whenever the Secretariat receives information, it always goes first to the Administrative Authority for clarification and never takes any action before doing so. The Secretariat encourages all NGOs to be constructive and be part of the solution, not just to lay blame.
 34. **The Chair** noted that the SG had touched upon many cases and challenges and asked the Parties to report on any good cases or challenges of their own. **The Republic of Korea** stressed the role that the Parties could play in promoting the Changwon Declaration and said that the Korean delegation would be doing so at the Commission on Sustainable Development meeting; she felt that every delegation should do the same in international fora. Concerning the capacities of the Secretariat, she felt that voluntary contributions and staff secondments could be solutions and noted that Korea had seconded a communications liaison to the Secretariat during the preparations for COP10. She suggested that other Parties could do so as well and asked the Secretariat to make known the tasks and roles needed.
 35. **Japan** has translated the the Changwon Declaration and distributed it widely amongst stakeholders in Japan, and will continue to draw attention to that and the rice paddy Resolution, e.g., at the CBD COP-10. Japan has prepared several information papers on water management and shared them at the World Water Forum, and would also like to share new guidelines on Integrated Water Resources Management prepared with UNESCO. Japan also translated the Secretariat's World Wetlands Day documents, and the Ministry of Environment is finalizing a report on WWD in English. Concerning the improvement of the Ramsar Web site, she felt that that would enhance the IT capacity of Ramsar but sought assurances that it will be managed by the Secretariat without additional cost to the core budget.
 36. **South Africa** appreciated the initiative to increase cooperation with the GEF, the CSD, and UN agencies, but noted that this is linked to the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform, and she hoped for a speedy resolution to that issue.
 37. **Wetlands International** suggested that the time has come to redraft the MOUs with the IOPs in order to make them into true two-way pathways, and she urged that the Ramsar Web site should have seamless links to the Web sites of the IOPs. She stressed cooperation with UN agencies and working together with the Secretariat and the IOPs on their ongoing programmes.

Agenda item 6: Establishment of the Subgroup on COP11 and any others

38. **The DSG** provided background on the Subgroup on COP11 and said that the Secretariat sees no need for other subgroups at this time. **The Chair** summarized the issues for a decision, as follows:

Decision SC40-1: The Standing Committee established a Subgroup on COP11, with Romania as its Chair and including one SC member or designated substitute from each region. The members chosen to serve are, for Africa, Uganda; for Asia, Lebanon; for Europe, Croatia; for the Neotropics, Panama; for North America, [TBA]; and for Oceania, Marshall Islands, as well as the Chair of the STRP.

39. **Romania** expressed gratitude for the honor of having been chosen to organize Ramsar COP11 and noted that the Ministry of Environment will organize an interministerial working group for the purpose. Romania will use this opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of wetland conservation and the benefits of wetlands for Romanian communities. Regional cooperation among Black Sea countries and cross-border cooperation will be highlighted. The COP will be hosted in the capital city Bucharest, in the Palace of Parliament.
40. **The Chair** welcomed Romania's statement and expressed the SC's thanks.

Agenda item 7: Report of the Management Working Group

41. **The Chair** reviewed the composition and purpose of the MWG and led the way through the Group's report, explaining its recommendations to the SC in some detail.

Decision SC40-2: The Standing Committee determined that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance should continue to act as an informal intersessional "Executive Team" to support and advise the Secretary General on matters arising.

Decision SC40-3: The Standing Committee decided that for the final year of the Convention cycle (i.e., the COP year), the Secretary General's annual performance assessment should be undertaken by the outgoing "Executive Team" in consultation with the new Executive Team. A "360 degree" review element should be continued so that Secretariat staff can contribute to this assessment. A periodic informal meeting between the SC Chair and Secretariat staff should be continued.

Decision SC40-4: The Standing Committee agreed that a general principle should be to establish continuity (past Chairs, etc.) in all Standing Committee subgroups, in particular the Subgroups on Finance and on the COP. For the STRP Oversight Committee, the former Chair of Standing Committee should be added, and for the CEPA Oversight Panel, the former Vice-Chair of Standing Committee should be added to achieve this continuity – but because, for these two groups, a COP decision will be needed to formally introduce these additions, it would be valuable to initiate this during the current cycle as "ex officio" roles, provided there are no additional cost implications.

Decision SC40-5: The Standing Committee determined that the Executive Team should be asked to review the most recent process for recruitment of any new Secretary General and a) ensure that it is fully documented and b) make any

recommendations for improvements, with the advice of IUCN Human Resources staff, for consideration by Standing Committee.

42. **Wetland International** reiterated that the Convention's relationships with the IOPs should be reviewed and made more concrete, more detailed, and more strategic. **The DSG** noted the need to review both the general relationship with all the IOPs and the bilateral relationship with each of them. **The Chair** suggested that the Secretariat be asked to prepare a thoroughly collaborative review with the IOPs and present it to SC41.

Decision SC40-6: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to develop a thoroughly collaborative review with the International Organization Partners of the Convention's relationships with the IOPs, in order to strengthen them strategically and make them more concrete and detailed, including in relation to in-country implementation support activities.

43. **WWF** suggested that investigation of a Secretariat Partnership Officer position should include consultations with selected business companies and private foundations.

Decision SC40-7: The Standing Committee:

- i) requested the Secretariat to call a one-day meeting of development officers of INGO, etc., from the Geneva region as soon as possible. This could be focused on identifying value-added synergies in terms of fundraising for major initiative implementation through, for example, International Organization Partners, to support national capacity for wetland conservation and wise use;
 - ii) requested the Secretariat, following this step, to assess whether any other means (e.g., a consultancy) of acquiring such information to focus the priorities and approach is needed to help develop further a focused strategy and Terms of Reference for the Partnership Officer post, consulting with selected business companies and private foundations as appropriate;
 - iii) requested the Secretariat to develop draft Terms of Reference for the post, in the light of i) and ii) above and in relation to the general terms in Resolution X.2 Annex III, to be reviewed by the Standing Committee Chair and a small number of interested Standing Committee members and Parties (Jamaica, Japan); and
 - iv) determined that, under this scenario, funds allocated in the 2009 core budget for the partnership development would need to be carried over to the 2010 budget in order to be able to support a full-time officer for 2010 onwards, noting that a small amount of the funds will be needed in 2009 to cover the costs of i) and ii) above.
44. **The Chair** noted, concerning the venue of the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee, that the MWG felt that the COP10 decision allows a future SC meeting to be hosted by a Contracting Party instead of being held in the Secretariat facilities, but it did emphasize the need for thorough communications and assurances from the prospective host well in advance.
45. **Georgia** confirmed its offer to host SC41 and pledged that all necessary information will be provided by the end of July, as requested. Georgia intends to use the opportunity to

promote wetland wise use at the national level and to foster regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

46. **Argentina** thanked Georgia for the generous offer and stressed that the objection that Argentina will be making on behalf of the GRULAC countries, when this matter is taken up in Agenda item 16, implies no disparagement of Georgia's commitment.

Agenda item 8: Report of the Subgroup on Finance

47. **Finland, the Chair of the Subgroup**, thanked the outgoing Chair, the USA, and the Secretariat for their contributions and assistance. She led the way through the report of the Subgroup's discussions and its recommendations to the Standing Committee for its consideration.
48. **The Chair** took up each of the Agenda items in turn and summarized items 8.1 and 8.2 on the audited accounts for 2008 and proposed allocations of the Reserve Fund surplus.
49. **Islamic Republic of Iran** asked for clarification of the exchange rate loss, and the **Finance Officer** explained that for reporting financial information, we are required to assess the exchange holdings at the end of the year.
50. **Madagascar**, on behalf of the African participants, suggested that the surplus in the Reserve Fund should be applied to technical support for Africa instead, and proposed that legal assistance should be obtained from IUCN rather than from that surplus. She suggested that necessary controls should have been in place so that there would not have been a budgetary shortfall.
51. **The DSG** said that it would be very unlikely that IUCN would be able to provide independent legal advice without charging for it as an additional service, and that that might invoke conflict of interest issues in any case.
52. **The SG** added that the lack of legal expertise makes the Secretariat unduly vulnerable and unable to react when necessary. Some MEA secretariats have several legal staff members, but we are seeking access to minimum capacity. He stressed that there was no shortfall for 2008. There were two Standing Committee meetings, when only one had been budgeted for. But in any case, through its negotiations with IUCN the Secretariat has saved CHF 225,000 for financial services that had been separately charged and this has covered the shortfall. The budget was balanced and there was a surplus.
53. Concerning the small re-allocation to supporting Ramsar Advisory Missions, **the SG** noted that the Secretariat has many pending requests for technical missions but no budget line to support that. It is important to be able to show that the Secretariat is trying to respond to those requests.

Agenda items 8.1 and 8.2: Audited accounts for 2008 and status of the Reserve Fund

Decision SC40-8: The Standing Committee approved the 2008 audited accounts as provided in DOC. SC40-6 rev.1 (which includes the CHF 59,000 release of the Reserve Fund) and agreed the allocations of the surplus to the Reserve Fund for 2008 as indicated in DOC. SC40-7 rev.1.

Agenda item 8.3: The Secretariat's budget for 2009

Decision SC40-9: The Standing Committee approved the core budget allocations for 2009 as set out in DOC. SC40-2 rev.1, expressed its thanks to those Parties that have made additional voluntary contributions, and noted the current declines in voluntary contributions. The Committee appealed to the members and the Secretariat to redouble their efforts in finding voluntary funding for important activities such as the work of the STRP, the Small Grants Fund, and Ramsar Advisory Missions.

Agenda item 8.4: The Secretariat's services agreement with IUCN

Decision SC40-10: The Standing Committee noted the successful conclusion of the Letter of Agreement on Services with IUCN, reaffirmed the 13% budget ceiling adopted by Resolution X.2 (2008), and charged the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance to work with the Secretary General in support of the negotiations and reach a resolution so that no more than 13% has to be charged to the Ramsar core budget.

Agenda item 8.5: Parties that are consistently in arrears with payments to the Convention

Decision SC40-11: The Standing Committee urged all Parties with unpaid contributions to the core budget to respond to the terms of Resolution X.2 on this matter as a priority, requested the Secretariat to continue to work with each Party in arrears to resolve this on a case by case basis, and requested the Chair of the Standing Committee do whatever is necessary to support the Secretariat's actions and where necessary to consider contacting Parties in default directly.

Agenda item 8.6: Optimizing the Small Grants Fund

Decision SC40-12: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Senior Regional Advisor for Europe on the current situation of the Small Grants Fund and the process planned for finalizing the 2008 Allocation Report and evaluating 2009 proposals for the Standing Committee's approval.

54. **The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance** reported on two additional recommendations to the SC concerning staff salary awards and future engagement with the Global Environment Facility.

Decision SC40-13: The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance to review the overall process and mechanisms for Secretariat staff salary awards, clearly considering the decision-making responsibilities of the Secretary General vs. where Ramsar should follow IUCN processes.

Decision SC40-14: The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance to consider how best the Secretariat and Parties could engage more strongly with the Global Environment Facility so as to enhance the opportunity for GEF to act more directly as a funding instrument for the Ramsar Convention (as presently for the CBD, the UNFCCC, and the UNCCD), especially in relation to *inter alia* its

International Waters focal area and including in relation to opportunities for further redevelopment of “Signature Initiatives” in collaboration with the IOPs; to identify Ramsar Parties that are also members of the GEF Council and request them to use their positions to help to accomplish this; and to report on this to the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 9: Regional Initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Convention

55. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Europe** provided background on the provisions in Resolution X.6 (2008) concerning Regional Initiatives and the Operational Guidelines for administering them. He explained that the Resolution instructed the Secretariat to develop evaluation criteria and procedures for SC approval, to develop standard reporting formats, and with the SC to report on results to COP11.
56. **The SRA** noted that the SC is requested to examine and approve the proposed initiatives that fully meet the Operational Guidelines as operating within the framework of the Convention, and then to determine levels of financial support to be provided. He stressed that the total amount to be allocated is fixed by the COP-approved budget, so that should the SC determine to increase the allocation to any proposal, it must also decrease the allocation to one or more other proposals.
57. **The SRA** proposed that the SC first consider the adoption of the Evaluation Criteria in Annex I to DOC. SC40-10, then adopt the reporting formats in Annex II, then the model for national letters of support in Annex III. He noted that many letters of support have been received since the publication of DOC. SC40-10. He suggested that proposals could be approved as operating within the framework of the Convention, or approved provisionally (endorsed for one-year, with eligibility for funding and possible approval by SC41 to 2012), or recognized as being in development and encouraged to continue.
58. **The SRA** reported that the regional teams’ evaluations, based on the Criteria, determined that 11 of the 16(+1) proposals fully met the Operational Guidelines and that 3(+1) do not fully respond to the Guidelines and should be endorsed provisionally. He explained specifics concerning WacoWet and the Pacific Islands proposal.
59. **The Chair** noted that, as foreseen, the Regional Initiatives is a difficult issue to agree, and he proposed beginning with the easiest matters first: 1) adopting the annexes, 2) considering each proposal for endorsement, and 3) allocation of funding support.
60. **Brazil** observed that paras. 10 and 12 of the Annex I Evaluation Criteria could be brought into better conformity with the language of the Operational Guidelines. He suggested for para. 10, “the initiative is supported by professional staff”, and for criterion 12 substituting the following: “The initiative benefits from the support of a host country or intergovernmental organization for the establishment of a professional coordination body or mechanism. If established, the coordination body is responsible to all members that constitute the Regional Initiative and has transparent government and organizational structures laid down in commonly agreed terms of reference, rules of procedure, or operational guidance.” There was no opposition to Brazil’s suggested amendments.
61. **Japan** pointed out that the list of evaluation indicators annexed to the meeting document is simply a shortened version of Resolution X.6 and that Parties had agreed on that

Resolution at COP10 in Changwon. Hence she raised the question whether the SC needs to adopt the list again. Japan also pointed out that there are several indicators that overlap and suggested that the indicators need to be reviewed sometime in the future to improve the quality of the list.

62. **China** questioned the phrase “support from all or at least a significant number” of Parties in the region. **The SRA** explained that the wording was the result of diplomatic negotiations at COP10; since regions and objectives differ widely, the COP thought it would be best for the SC to decide how much support should be required on a case-by-case basis.
63. **The Netherlands** felt that “all relevant stakeholders” in criterion 15 is too restrictive, but **the SRA** pointed out that that is the language used in the Resolution and could not be changed by the Secretariat.
64. **Marshall Islands** together with Australia would like to support the evaluation criteria in Annex I of DOC. SC40-10.
65. **Mexico** agreed that the “all or significant number” of supporting Parties needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis using common sense and good judgement. The mangrove initiative is relevant only to those regional Parties that have mangroves.

Decision SC40-15: The Standing Committee adopted the Evaluation Criteria for Regional Initiatives as found in Annex I of DOC. SC40-10, with the amendments proposed by Brazil, but will keep them under review for consideration by SC41.

66. **Marshall Islands** suggested that the 3rd and 4th columns in the table in para. 2 of Annex II could be swapped.

Decision SC40-16: The Standing Committee adopted the “Format for annual financial and work plan reporting” for Regional Initiatives as found in Annex II of DOC. SC40-10, with the amendment proposed by Marshall Islands.

67. **The Chair** emphasized that Annex III, the proposed “model for national letters of support”, is just a model and can be amended by any writer. **Paraguay** suggested that, since it is only a model, it should be “welcomed” rather than “adopted”. **Argentina** agreed that the model might need to be flexibly adapted on a case-by-case basis.
68. **China** suggested deleting the phrase about financial support, since some Parties might be unable to sign such a letter if financial commitments are included. **WWF International** agreed, noting that frequently the financial support comes from international donors and not from the Parties. Suggestions were made to amend the wording of para. 3 to clarify that the model is only suggested and can be altered at need.

Decision SC40-17: The Standing Committee welcomed the model letter of support as found in Annex III of DOC. SC40-10, with the deletion of the last line of para. 3 of the preamble.

69. **The Chair** proposed to go through each of the proposed Regional Initiatives as evaluated by the Secretariat regional teams using the Evaluation Criteria, and to seek consensus

approval for each of them as endorsed, provisionally endorsed, or recognized as under development.

70. **Thailand** felt unable to make such judgments without having seen the evaluations themselves. **The SRA for Europe** explained that the original proposals have been available on the Ramsar Web site, as indicated in DOC. SC40-10, para. 9 – that is the information that was evaluated, along with the regional teams’ own knowledge of the circumstances of the initiatives. The teams used, in effect, the Operational Guidelines along with common sense and their judgment.
71. **Lebanon** requested that the Iran Centre RRC-CWA should be added to the “ongoing” list of initiatives before considering the list, and he proposed preparing a Revision 1 of DOC. SC40-10. **The Chair** indicated that each initiative will be considered on its own merits. **Islamic Republic of Iran** agreed with Lebanon that we are considering the initiatives by categories, and that the RRC-CWA should be included in the “ongoing” category. **The Chair** reiterated that however we take them up it will be the same, and to make the task easier they will be considered one by one.
72. **WWF** provided an update on ChadWet and NigerWet mentioned in para. 17. Both are progressing towards achieving large-scale funding and the SC can expect a full update at its next meeting.
73. **China** and the **Senior Regional Advisor for Asia/Oceania** proposed amendments to the proposal for the Ramsar Center for Eastern Asia. **The Chair** offered an update on the progress of developing that initiative, which will probably be self-sustaining and will play a great role in the region.
74. **China** expressed support for the Himalayan Initiative but explained that China’s amendments to the draft proposal had not been taken on board or responded to. He recommended that the SC not take a decision on this proposal and only instruct the parties to continue their discussions. He urged that the funding proposed for this initiative be transferred to the Iran Center instead.
75. **The DSG** pointed out that it is not necessary for all countries in the region to wish to participate in the initiative – it is up to each Party to decide. That should not be an impediment to any proposals that are well evaluated. He felt that given the commitment of several of the Himalayan Parties to support the initiative, it should be encouraged.
76. **WWF International** noted that WWF has supported the development of the Himalayan Initiative, technically and financially, for seven years and has seen substantial progress and support from India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan, as well as from IOPs WWF, IUCN, and Wetlands International, and from ICIMOD. He urged a full endorsement, subject to further consultation with China.
77. **China** said that the problem was not whether China wished to participate, but rather that there has not been an opportunity for all relevant Parties to discuss the text. He felt that it would be premature for the SC to consider or adopt the proposal.
78. **The SRA for Asia/Oceania** suggested that, since China supports the initiative in principle, and given the amount of everyone’s work at stake, the remaining issues are not

substantial. He proposed that the SC endorse the Himalayan Initiative on condition that the parties consult to find a resolution, and that the financial allocation be put on hold until that resolution has been found.

79. **China** accepted the SRA's suggestion on condition that the allocation be put on hold until a resolution is found. **Tanzania** and **the Chair** urged the parties to consult and report back by tomorrow mid-day.
80. **Jamaica** strongly supported paras. 13-14 of DOC. SC40-10 and said that the required information on the Caribbean and Mangrove Initiatives will be provided by the end of 2009. **The Netherlands** inquired whether overseas territories would be eligible to participate in the Caribbean Initiative, and **the SRA**, with concurrence from Jamaica, indicated that since the SC has decided that overseas territories are eligible for the Small Grants Fund they should be eligible for this initiative as well.
81. **The Netherlands** inquired about the relationship between the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership and the Convention on Migratory Species. **The DSG** reported that both Ramsar and the CMS are members of this Type II WSSD Partnership.
82. **Mexico** expressed an interest in the Caribbean and Mangrove Initiatives, even though Mexico is not technically in that region, and **the DSG** reassured that “regional” is not limited to the Ramsar regional grouping. **Georgia** supported the Black Sea Coastal Wetlands proposal and requested additional information about it.
83. **The SRA for Europe** noted that some evaluation criteria were missing from the Caribbean, Mangrove, and Black Sea proposals and suggested that the SC endorse them for this year with the provision that they submit completed criteria for SC41 to become endorsed to 2012; they would still be eligible for funding support. He said that the Secretariat is proposing that the Iran Center should be included in 2009 in this group because of substantial gaps which can probably be filled over the next year.
84. **Lebanon** urged that the Iran Center be put in the “ongoing” category because it has an important role to play in the region, which covers 17 countries, and because it has provided some training and capacity building. **The Chair** reassured Lebanon that everyone understands the value, and the symbolic value, of the Iran Center.
85. **The Chair** adjourned the plenary session for the day, and **Uganda** showed a brief video on the effects of climate change on the glaciers and farmers of the Rwenzori Mountains.

Day Two, 14 May 2009

Agenda item 9: Regional Initiatives (continued)

86. **The Chair** reported that he had talked with the interested parties and felt that a consensus seems near.
87. **The SRA for Asia/Oceania**, after discussions with China, reported that the SC could adopt the Himalayan Initiative on the condition that the parties come to agreement on a few minor items and that the money would be held up until agreement had been reached. **The Chair** proposed that the Initiative be endorsed fully under those terms.

88. **China** announced that in general China supported the Himalayan Initiative but that some substantial issues remain unresolved. He suggested that the SC should adopt the proposal automatically after letters of agreement had been received from all the Administrative Authorities concerned and that the money should be withheld until then. **The Chair** noted that that seemed to be different from what was said yesterday and from what the SRA has proposed. **China** indicated that there is no need to adopt the Initiative at this meeting, as it can be adopted automatically when agreement has been reached. **The SRA for Europe** urged that China and the SRA for Asia/Oceania discuss the matter further and report back.
89. Subsequently, it was reported that there has been a meeting between China and the Republic of Korea concerning the Ramsar Regional Center for East Asia and consensus has been reached between both sides to resolve all the outstanding issues.
90. **The Chair** noted that the RRC-CWA center in Iran has been established for quite a long time, was approved in the last triennium, and has symbolic meaning because of its home, and he proposed that it be included in the ongoing category as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines, following the provision of further information on its activities in 2008.
91. **The Chair** noted that the two initiatives in the third category, WacoWet and Pacific Islands, were evaluated by the Secretariat as needing further development, and he proposed recognizing them as under development and urging them to submit full proposals for SC41.
92. **The SRA for Africa** noted that the government of Benin, the coordinator of WacoWet, has sent a message promising to provide all needed documents and information in time for consideration by SC41. **The Chair** found that very encouraging.
93. **The Netherlands** underlined the importance of West Africa for Europe because of the common flyway and noted that an AEWA action plan for Africa will be prepared (funds permitting). In addition, he mentioned the extensive work of Wetlands International in West Africa.

Decision SC40-18: The Standing Committee endorsed the following Regional Initiatives as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines and operating within the framework of the Convention in 2009-2012 and agreed that they may be eligible for funding in any year during that period:

Carpathian Wetland Initiative
East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
High Andean Wetland Strategy (EHAA)
Himalayan Wetlands Initiative (on condition that agreement is reached on outstanding points among all countries participating – currently China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – money to be withheld until that time)
La Plata River Basin Initiative
Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
Nile River Basin Initiative (NileWet)

Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)
Ramsar Center for Eastern Asia in the Republic of Korea
Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama
Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
Ramsar Regional Center for Central and Western Asia (RRC-CWA)
(following the provision of further information on activities in 2008)

The Committee endorsed the following Initiatives provisionally for one year (with eligibility for support) and urged them to submit full proposals for SC41 and possible full endorsement for the rest of the COP cycle until 2012:

Black Sea Coast Initiative
Caribbean Subregional Strategy
Mangrove Ecosystems in the Americas

The Committee recognized two Initiatives as under development and encouraged them to submit full proposals for SC41:

Pacific Islands
West African Coastal Zone (WacoWet)

94. **The Chair** noted that ChadWet and NigerWet have not sent proposals and suggested that the Standing Committee encourage them to submit full information for the next SC meeting. **WWF International** reiterated that both of those Initiatives, which were endorsed for the last triennium, do not request financial support from the Ramsar core budget. They have been unable to submit progress reports because of transition periods in the senior staffing of their host organizations, but both are on track to securing large-scale funding, and the SC can expect full information by SC41. He urged that they be approved provisionally for one year.
95. **The Chair** observed that there are no materials from them to assess and recommended that the SC encourage them to submit their proposals for the next SC meeting.

Decision SC40-19: Recognizing the importance of the ChadWet and NigerWet Initiatives in the Africa region and bearing in mind their transition period, the Standing Committee encouraged those Initiatives to submit updated information for potential approval at the next SC meeting.

Financial allocations for selected Regional Initiatives

96. **The Chair** called upon the Chair of the Subgroup of Finance to guide the discussion. **Finland, the Chair of the Subgroup**, noted that the Subgroup shared concerns about the quality of some of the proposals but realized that some of them need seed money to get underway. She referred to the table in the Subgroup's meeting report for its recommendations on allocations. She suggested that the additional earmarked funding provided by certain African Parties should be allocated according to the wishes of the African Parties in consultation with the SRA for Africa.
97. **The Chair** proposed that the funding be allocated according to the recommendation of the Subgroup on Finance.

98. **Lebanon** expressed appreciation for the recategorization of the RRC-CWA center in Iran but suggested that the allocation is money from 2008, whereas the Center is asking for funding for its ongoing programme. **The Chair** proposed informal discussions on whether to adopt the Subgroup's recommendations or to review them afresh, to be led by the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and comprising any stakeholders and interested parties.

Agenda item 4: Roles and responsibilities of the SC (continued)

99. **The Chair** reported that informal discussions led by the USA have considered the outstanding issues from yesterday's discussion of the role of the SC.
100. **The USA** reported on the helpful informal discussions and conveyed the group's recommendations. The group felt that the issue in DOC. SC40-4 para. 7 concerning closed sessions could be addressed in future if and when it any such situation might arise and recommended deleting para. 7 as requested, without expressing any view about closed sessions; the participants agreed that the Secretary General should look into the files to see whether closed sessions had been discussed and resolved earlier in the Convention's history.
101. **The USA** said the group also recommended that the Secretariat be urged to review the archives to see whether any work had already been done on defining the role and status of the SC's Permanent Observers, and it felt that it was important for the Regional Representatives to meet the terms of Resolution VII.1.
102. **The DSG** observed that there might be some language ambiguities between the COP Rules and Resolution VII.1 and suggested that the Secretariat could be asked to make sure that there are no uncertainties there. He felt that in clarifying the role of the Permanent Observers guidance should be drafted on potentially adding new ones.
103. **The Chair** summarized that para. 7 should be deleted from SC40-4 without prejudice to any future interpretations of the Rules on closed sessions that might arise, the Secretariat should clarify any ambiguities between Resolution VII.1 and the current Rules of Procedure and suggest improvements to SC41, and the Secretariat should be asked to make a proposal to SC41 on the roles and status of Permanent Observers and regular Observers at individual meetings. SC41 should then consider whether a Resolution updating Resolution VII.1 should be brought to COP11.
104. **The DSG** stressed that para. 7 is a paragraph in a briefing note, which has no adopted status within the Convention. If the matter of closed sessions ever arises, having removed this paragraph has no implications at all for interpretation of the Rules or the Resolution. If it arises, the issues will have to be determined case-by-case based upon the Rules of Procedure.
105. **Cameroon** said that UNEP should be made a Permanent Observer and proposed that the Secretariat should accept that. **The DSG** observed that it is necessary first to determine what a Permanent Observer is and how it differs from a regular Observer, and to clarify a procedure for how to add new Permanent Observers, which will probably require a COP Resolution.

106. **Cameroon** urged that the proposal should remain on the table awaiting clarification on the Permanent Observers' role and brought back to SC41. **The SG** pointed out that this is the kind of issue for which the Convention needs legal advice, and he indicated that legal advice will be sought on whether this is a matter for the Standing Committee or the COP.
107. **Cameroon** asked which predominates, a decision of the SC or the general opinion of the Parties. The Secretariat is there to support the Parties, not to predominate over them.
108. **South Africa** thanked Cameroon for raising the issue of UNEP and understood that UNEP would remain an observer like any other pending a study of the status of Permanent Observer, and she looked forward to learning the legal opinion at the next SC meeting.
109. **The USA** felt that for any MEA Secretariat legal questions are ultimately questions for the Conference of the Parties to decide, so the opinions of the Secretariat should not always be considered binding.
110. **The DSG** explained that the Secretariat is here to serve the Parties, and its role is to advise the Parties on due process and the most appropriate procedures to be followed. The Standing Committee operates under the mandates of the Resolutions of the COP, and the Secretariat is obliged to offer its advice lest the SC inadvertently overstep its authority.
111. **The SG** confirmed that the Secretariat is not a decision-making body – that is why we have a Standing Committee that carries out the mandates of the COP intersessionally.
112. **The Chair** felt that the SC members do understand the role of the Secretariat and can benefit from its long-accumulated knowledge of the Convention's history and procedures, and it should welcome the Secretariat's advice whilst not being bound to follow it. After a full understanding of the status of Permanent Observers has been obtained, the SC can explore the next steps to take.

Decision SC40-20: The Standing Committee determined 1) to delete para. 7 from DOC. SC40-4 without prejudice to any future interpretations of the Rules on closed sessions that might arise, 2) to request the Secretariat to clarify any ambiguities between Resolution VII.1 and the current Rules of Procedure and suggest improvements to SC41, and 3) to request the Secretariat to make a proposal to SC41 on the roles and status of Permanent Observers and regular Observers at individual meetings. The Committee will then consider whether a Resolution updating Resolution VII.1 should be brought to COP11.

Agenda item 10.4: Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform

113. **The SG** reported on activities concerning the legal status of the Secretariat undertaken since COP10. Two meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group have been held, with Australia and Chile as co-chairs, and the Secretariat has continued taking steps. A letter has been sent to all Parties asking them to help in providing visas for Ramsar staff, and a service agreement and delegation of authority have been concluded with IUCN. He introduced Osvaldo Alvarez, Chile, one of the two co-chairs.

114. **Chile, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group**, explained that the Group met on 19 January and 24 March and the meeting reports, following a period for comments from all the members, have been posted on the Ramsar Web site. The Co-Chairs have sent a letter to the Executive Director of UNEP and the Director General of IUCN requesting further information. The first meeting was basically organizational, and the second meeting discussed its work programme and the wording of the letters.
115. **The Co-Chair** indicated that all options remain on the table. A response has been received from IUCN and is expected from UNEP by early autumn. The Working Group will review both of those responses at its next meeting, in November, and will then try to make a recommendation. The documents are on the Web site and comments are welcomed.
116. **Ecuador** thanked the Co-Chairs and Secretariat for an excellent job and inquired when the Working Group's documents would be publicly available on the Ramsar Web site, particularly the Co-Chairs' letters to UNEP and IUCN; whether the Co-Chairs have had an opportunity to meet with the Executive Director of UNEP and what the outcome of that was; and whether the agenda for the Group's third meeting in November will be available in advance.
117. **South Africa** said that the African Parties attach great importance to the efficiency of the Secretariat. Based on the mandate in Resolution X.5, reports and updated information for the Standing Committee would have been appreciated. She called for transparency and clarity in the process of moving forward and for more information, especially concerning IUCN and UNEP.
118. **Cameroon** requested to see the contents of the letter sent to IUCN and UNEP. **Chile** explained that the Ad Hoc Working Group's documents have all been available on a Web page set up for the Group – that that will now be opened to the public, and the letter from the Co-Chairs to UNEP will be posted there as well. To one of Ecuador's questions, the Co-Chair noted that he was able to talk with Achim Steiner on the sidelines of the Stockholm meeting and got assurances that the Executive Director and his staff could respond to the requests for information in time. He indicated that the November meeting has no agenda as yet, but it will focus on UNEP's response for much of the time. If there is a consensus amongst the Working Group, it can forward a recommendation for the SC's consideration.
119. To South Africa's intervention, **the Co-Chair** explained that the Working Group was open to all interested parties and there was an open process for comment before the meeting reports were finalized.
120. **Germany** noted that the other Co-Chair had moved back to Australia and asked how he would be replaced; **Chile** indicated that his replacement at the Australian Permanent Mission will take over for him.
121. **Argentina** said that none of the three options has been excluded and that Option 2, becoming an independent organization, is still on the table. She requested clarification about whether the Working Group's mandate was restricted to the UNEP option or other parts of the UN system could also be considered. The Co-Chair explained that the Group wished first to examine Options 1 (improved status within IUCN) and 3 (joining UNEP), and then turn to Option 2 if needed. He noted that Resolution X.5 para. 12 tasks the

Group to look into the possibility of being under the umbrella of UNEP, which does seem limiting.

122. **The USA** said that it has expressed its reservations often about whether any further discussion of these issues represents the best use of our time. He felt that looking for an administrative fix for image issues is not the best way to go. The USA does not support continuing the work of the Working Group beyond what is already planned. He recalled that Resolution X.5 establishing the Working Group focused on Options 1 and 3, since it would not be feasible to amend the Convention to allow the Secretariat to become an independent organization.
123. **Ecuador** supported Argentina's view and felt that Resolution X.5 called for a study of all of the options, and thus the Group should look at Option 2 as well. **Uganda** drew attention to Resolution X.5 para. 12, which indicates that the Standing Committee may, if it wishes, authorize the Group to examine the independent organization option following completion of its primary task, i.e., determining between the present IUCN situation and joining UNEP. **The Co-Chair** agreed that the Group has not put Option 2 aside completely – it will study 1 and 3 and if those do not fulfill our requirements then the Group will examine Option 2.
124. **Argentina** felt that it would be advisable to look into the UN system apart from UNEP.
125. **The Chair** thanked the Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group, on behalf of the Standing Committee, for his informative report and asked to be kept informed of progress.

Agenda item 10.1: Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015

126. **The DSG** described the role mandated for the SC in Resolution X.1 to assess progress and any difficulties in implementing the Strategic Plan and, with the Secretariat, to conduct a mid-term review of progress and propose adjustments, if necessary, to be submitted to COP11. Such a mid-term review would have to be initiated at SC41. He suggested that the Regional Representatives consult with Parties in their regions and transmit the responses to the Secretariat for compilation into a report for SC41. **The Chair** summarized wording for a decision.

Decision SC40-21: The Standing Committee requested the Regional Representatives to seek the views of Parties in their regions about the progress and any difficulties of implementing the Strategic Plan and to transmit that information to the Secretariat, and tasked the Secretariat to compile a paper from this information for discussion at the next meeting of the SC.

Agenda item 10.2: Promotion and utilization of the Changwon Declaration

127. **The DSG** recalled that the key messages of the Changwon Declaration are intended for other sectors and not for ourselves. He sought the views of the SC on the most effective ways to promote it, and reported that Korea with Japan's help have arranged for translations into 13 languages so far, which are all available on the Ramsar Web site and CD-ROM of COP10 Proceedings. He reported on additional steps that have been taken to bring it to the attention of other bodies, which have been well received. He raised the question of publishing it as an attractive brochure.

128. **The Chair** invited updates on steps taken and opinions about publishing a brochure.
129. **Thailand** reported that the Declaration has been translated into Thai and publicized during World Wetlands Day. She urged the Secretariat to bring it to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the Rio conventions.
130. **Madagascar** said that the Declaration has not been promoted quite enough by the African Parties and they will try to make it better known by various means.
131. **The Republic of Korea** thanked the Secretariat and all the Parties for their efforts and urged them all to visit the Web site and download the language versions. She reported that the Ramsar Foundation in Changwon has offered to provide financial support if the Parties should wish to publish it as a brochure.
132. **Japan** encouraged stakeholders and Parties to download it from the Web site and avoid the wastefulness of published hardcopy brochures.
133. **The Chair** raised the question of how many languages should be published, if a brochure were wanted, with the three official languages as a minimum.
134. **The Netherlands** drew attention to the Ministerial Declaration of the 5th World Water Forum, which has weak links between hydrological developments and ecological concerns. This issue is better covered by the Istanbul Water Guide. He pointed to the need to better reach the business sector and to emphasize the scope of wetlands, including rivers, etc., and not just swamps.
135. **Korea** announced that there will be a Changwon Declaration meeting convened in October or November to look for ways to promote it further, and she invited inputs and suggestions, information and ideas. **The DSG** noted the statue of the Declaration that has been erected in front of the CECO centre in Changwon. He suggested that the brochure could be published in PDF form and that the design files could be made available on the Web and/or on CD-ROM for use by Parties to include local languages.

Decision SC40-22: The Standing Committee congratulated all Parties that have already taken steps to promote the Changwon Declaration; urged the Parties and Standing Committee members to consider and report on additional ways of promoting it; thanked the Republic of Korea for its offer of funding the publication of a brochure and requested the Secretariat to collaborate in finding the best way of doing so; and encouraged the SC members to provide inputs to the Korean Ministry of Environment for the upcoming meeting on the Declaration to be held in Changwon in October or November 2009.

Agenda item 10.3: The Secretariat's Work Plan 2009

136. **The SG** sought review and approval of the Work Plan in DOC. SC40-12, noting that it represents the Secretariat's main directions, based on the Strategic Plan and Resolutions – he said that individual staff plans are also being developed and are awaiting adoption of this overall plan. He noted that another document just distributed identifies all actions requested from the STRP, Secretariat, SC, and IOPs.

137. **Tanzania** inquired how the SC could be asked to approve a plan for 2009 when the year is half over already. He urged that providing costings would add value to the plan. **The SG** explained that the timing of the COP and SC meetings left no alternative, but he noted that the draft Plan is based on COP mandates and so the Secretariat has been working along these lines already, and achievements so far this year are included in the Plan. He said that costing the tasks has proved in the past to be time-consuming and nearly impossible to do meaningfully.
138. **The Chair** and **the DSG** noted that the timing was unavoidable for 2009 but suggested that, if the SC wished, a draft Work Plan for 2010 could be circulated electronically for SC approval before the end of this year.
139. **Uganda** suggested that, if it is not too much work, the Secretariat could summarize implementation in 2009 at the same time. **The DSG** agreed that the Secretariat could provide a 2009 summary at the end of the year and a full report for SC41.
140. **Marshall Islands** said that Australia has sent proposed amendments to items 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 3.4.2, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.4, and 4.4.1, and he will provide the suggested text.
141. **The Netherlands** and **the DSG** discussed the timing of the drafting of the 5th Joint Work Plan with the CBD relative to the development of the CBD's new work plan for Inland Waters.

Decision SC40-23: The Standing Committee approved the Secretariat's proposed Work Plan for 2009, with the Oceania amendments, and requested the Secretariat to circulate a draft Work Plan for 2010 electronically by the end of November 2009 for electronic approval by the Committee by the end of December.

New Ramsar exhibition posters

142. **The CEPA Programme Officer** introduced the new Ramsar poster-style exhibits, which have been produced in three versions: English/French/Spanish, Chinese/English/Russian, and Arabic/French/English. She described the plan for distributing them presently to Administrative Authorities, wetland centres, etc., and urged recipients to have them plastified.
143. **The CEPA Programme Officer** thanked SC member Nabil Assaf, Lebanon, for assistance with the Arabic translation, WWF International (Alexander Belokurov) and Ramsar's Nadezhda Alexeeva for assistance with the Russian translation, and WWF Hong Kong (WEN Xianji) for assistance with the Chinese. The Secretariat will prepare sets in a mailing tube for any members who asked for them today.

Agenda item 14.1: Report of the STRP Oversight Committee

144. **The DSG** drew attention to DOC. SC40-16 and reported that the main task of the STRP Oversight Committee since COP10 has been the nomination and selection of new members for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). He stressed that the members are chosen for their individual expertise and not as representatives of countries.

145. **The DSG** reported that a new category had been created for “Invited Experts” and that the following experts had been selected for that: Teresita Borges Hernández (Cuba), Kassim Kulindwa (Tanzania), Ebenizário Chonguiça (Mozambique), Chris Gordon (Ghana), Sang-Don Lee (Rep. of Korea), Cui Lijuan (China), Ernesto Briones (Ecuador), Andrej Sirin (Russian Federation), and Royal Gardner (USA).
146. **The DSG** introduced Ms Monica Zavagli, formerly the Assistant Advisor for Europe and presently serving as Scientific and Technical Support Officer.

Decision SC40-24: The Standing Committee noted the report of the STRP Oversight Committee.

Agenda item 14.2: Report of the Chair of the STRP

147. **Heather MacKay, the Chair of the STRP**, made a PowerPoint presentation covering 1) a review of the STRP’s participation in COP10, 2) the outcomes of the 15th STRP meeting in March 2009, and 3) the draft STRP Work Plan for 2009-2012. (The PowerPoint presentation is available on the Ramsar Web site.)
148. Based on experience of COP10, the STRP recommended that more STRP technical briefings on topical subjects be held before and at the next COP, that the next COP should have more time for technical discussions, that there should be a budgetary provision to have STRP people leading on issues, and that the STRP should be enabled to communicate closely with the Subgroup on COP11.
149. **The STRP Chair** described the valuable STRP Support Service and noted that for various reasons it needs to be redeveloped soon, at a potential cost of CHF 35,000.
150. **The STRP Chair** described the European Space Agency’s GlobWetland II project on remote sensing in aid of Ramsar site managers. She indicated that GlobWetland needs the participation of Ramsar authorities in North Africa and urged officials in those countries to respond immediately to ESA’s invitation to collaborate.
151. She drew attention to the concept note provided by UNESCO-IHE (Institute for Water Education) to establish a Ramsar Chair in Wise Use of Wetlands and urged the SC to endorse that initiative.
152. **The STRP Chair** reviewed the detailed draft Work Plan 2009-2012 with its ten thematic work areas and noted that most of the tasks come from the Parties’ mandates in Resolution X.10. She explained that the kinds of products envisaged include COP-adopted guidelines annexed to Resolutions, Ramsar Technical Reports, STRP briefing notes, peer-reviewed journal articles, and assistance in drafting Resolutions. She explained the priority levels of the tasks and the annual budgets needed to pursue them, noting that for the 2009 high-priority tasks there is presently a shortfall of about CHF 100,000.
153. **The DSG** remarked that the Work Plan is a remarkable achievement as it was developed at the STRP meeting in March, only days before the one-month deadline for distribution of SC40 documents. He noted that it is still a work in progress and that future updates will be posted on the Web site. He highlighted the strong engagement of other organizations in the work of the STRP.

154. **Switzerland** expressed great appreciation for the STRP's presence at COP10 and offered thanks to the Chair and members; he urged that a way should be found to ensure the same presence at COP11.
155. **Namibia** made a preliminary offer to host a meeting for African STRP National Focal Points and invited suggestions for securing sufficient funding.
156. **Norway** noted the need for voluntary funding for the STRP's work and promised to investigate whether Norway could make a contribution.
157. **Finland** offered to make a voluntary contribution to the work of the STRP.
158. **Japan** referred to the STRP's work with the Japan Space Agency, JAXA, and noted that the Ministry of the Environment, the STRP National Focal Point, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not aware of these communications. **The STRP Chair** explained that the STRP has had a long-standing relationship with JAXA, representatives of which were present at STRP15; she promised to keep Japan informed. **Japan** noted that, at COP10 in Changwon, Japan made the same request to include the relevant stakeholders when STRP communicates with JAXA.
159. **Japan** inquired about the item concerning arctic wetlands; the **STRP Chair** and the **DSG** explained that that was requested by the COP, probably with the intention of making the Arctic Council more aware of the importance of wetlands. The STRP has also been asked to provide input to the World Heritage Convention on Arctic issues.
160. **Japan** asked about the COP position on water storage issues (task 7.4). **The STRP Chair** explained that there is no STRP or Convention position on water storage, though it has been a longstanding topic. It is an emerging issue, and there is a need for best practice on minimizing damage to wetlands; the Parties, in Resolution X.10, asked the STRP to look into this.
161. **Japan** noted that there are difficulties in using the existing guidance on wetland site restoration and questioned whether further guidance on regional restoration would be useful. In general, Japan said, the STRP's guidance can be useful but it is sometimes too technical for site managers, and she urged that the STRP produce simpler guidance. **The STRP Chair** agreed that it may be premature to look at regional restoration, as site restoration is more urgent. That the STRP guidance may sometimes be too technical also came out in the recent study of the effectiveness and use of the guidance, and she urged the Parties to provide such feedback about what doesn't work.
162. **The Netherlands** noted that, concerning agriculture and wetlands, the GAWI partners presented a report of their first phase at COP10 and this year will be an important one for possible continuation. So far only the Netherlands and Slovenia have supported it, and it would be important for other countries to become involved as well. He saw an opportunity to combine the work on agriculture and wetlands with the follow-up to the rice paddy Resolution. **The STRP Chair** agreed on the need for wider support for GAWI and on integrating work on rice paddy into this task.

163. **The Czech Republic** announced that it will organize an international course on wetland restoration for wetland managers and potentially for European STRP National Focal Points in June, and that the Czech Republic will consider making a voluntary contribution to the work of the STRP.
164. **Tanzania** offered to make a voluntary contribution of CHF 5,000 to the work of the Panel in the Africa region.
165. **Brazil** noted that the STRP is collecting information to input to the IPCC's 5th report and requested that this should be coordinated with the Standing Committee, so that the Parties can be informed and can contribute to this process. **The STRP Chair** agreed to do so and urged the Parties to take strong positions with the UNFCCC.
166. The Chair summarized the discussions in the form of a decision.

Decision SC40-25: The Standing Committee

- approved the STRP's draft Work Plan for 2009-2012, subject to the proposed amendments;
- urged Parties to consider making voluntary contributions to the STRP's work and expressed its appreciation to the Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom for their contributions and their pledges to consider providing funding support;
- requested the Chair of the STRP to participate as a member in the work of the Subgroup on COP11;
- urged Mediterranean Parties to collaborate with the European Space Agency's GlobWetland project and signify that promptly to the ESA;
- endorsed the concept of the UNESCO-IHE establishing a Ramsar Chair and requested the Secretary General to send a letter to that effect; and
- expressed its gratitude to the STRP for its active participation and support at Ramsar COP10.

Agenda item 14.3: Progress on ecological indicators of Ramsar effectiveness

167. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation on recent work on ecological outcome-oriented indicators of the effectiveness of the Convention, demonstrating the kinds of information that can be extracted and noting its primary preliminary conclusions – that the Ramsar Convention is effective in demonstrable ways, but only if its provisions and tools are implemented nationally, and that there is a correlation between the favorable status of wetlands and the presence of a National Wetland Policy. (The PowerPoint presentation is available on the Ramsar Web site.)

Decision SC40-26: The Standing Committee took note of the STRP's progress in developing indicators of effectiveness and encouraged further work.

Agenda item 9: Allocations for Regional Initiatives (continued)

168. **Finland, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, reported that the Subgroup met again during lunchtime and was able to learn about the latest developments of the Ramsar Center for Central and West Asia in Iran from its director and profited from exchanges with

Parties involved in other regional centers also participating in the meeting in addition to the Subgroup members (Uganda, Panama) as well as several Secretariat staff (three Senior Regional Advisers and the Finance Officer).

169. **The Chair** reported that the Subgroup proposes to SC40 to allocate available Ramsar core budget funds for 2009 to the ten Regional Initiatives asking for such funds, as detailed in the table attached to the minutes of its meeting on 12 May.

Decision SC40-27: The Standing Committee determined to allocate available Ramsar core budget funds for 2009 to 10 regional initiatives asking for such funds, as follows:

regional initiative	allocation 2009
i) networks	
WacoWet	17,000
High Andean	22,000
Himalayan	25,000
Carpathian	37,500
Black Sea	44,690
Caribbean	25,000
American mangroves	25,000
total for networks	196,190
ii) centers	
CREHO center Panama	23,643
Iran Center	35,000
RAMCEA centre Uganda	76,357
total for centers	135,000
Totals	331,190

Decision SC40-28: The Standing Committee urged all Parties directly concerned in the activities of regional centers for training and capacity building and in regional networks for improved implementation of the Convention to provide such centers and initiatives with their substantial support, political, in kind and financial, where possible, and to the maximum extent possible. Such support is crucial to allow such centers and networks to develop, to establish themselves and to become rapidly self-sustainable, in order to provide lasting, structural and operational support to the Parties in the regions concerned. The Secretariat is requested to advise such centers and networks, to the extent of its capacities, on how best to raise additional funds for their operations. The regional center in Iran should receive particular attention in this context in view of its plans to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Convention in 2011.

Agenda item 11: Review of COP10 National Reports and development of National Report Forms for COP11

170. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation on National Reports in the Convention, noting the Ramsar Parties' extraordinarily high response rate, and pointing out that the one COP with a lower rate (85%) was the one for which the longest and most complex NR Form was used. He reviewed the seven purposes of national reporting and suggested a timeline for development of the next NR Form for COP11.

171. **Thailand** urged that national reporting should be a two-way communication between the Parties and the Secretariat. **The DSG** noted that there is an interaction between the Secretariat and the Parties before posting the Reports. **Thailand** noted that developing countries need assistance from the Secretariat in dealing with threats specific to their own situations, and that should be part of the NR.
172. **Japan** expressed concern that the next NR Form might be different from its predecessors, because continuity is important for comparisons. Also, Japan usually translates the Form in order to consult with other stakeholders, so length is an issue.
173. **The Netherlands** found the cross-referencing from the COP9 to the COP10 Form to be a practical tool and urged that it be done again. He urged that the Form be developed in such a way that it can be split up in thematic pieces, for completion by various actors, and re-integrated again afterward. He reported that the AEW countries have an interest in harmonization of reporting and the form adopted at the most recent MOP should be investigated.
174. **Mexico** found the last NR Form easy to compile and suggested that the same central questions be carried forward over the years, with a new section each time for emerging issues.
175. **Lebanon** suggested that the Parties that did not submit their National Report should be asked why they did not. **The DSG** agreed that the Secretariat should verify if those Parties have submitted previous NRs and thus the issue should be followed up by the Secretariat.
176. **The DSG** sensed a common view that the new NR should be as similar as possible in content, reduced in length if possible, and he agreed that querying why some Parties did not submit their NRs might be interesting, especially to see if they were the same Parties from COP to COP. He said that a similar cross-referencing tool will be included. He noted that the last NR Form was a Word document with locked reply forms, but they could easily be unlocked for working purposes, and this time the password will probably be made freely available. He was not sure if there is a way easily to cut the form apart and put it back together again.
177. **The DSG** noted that on-line reporting has been tried by some MEAs, but that it only works if all Parties can access it. Ramsar is unlikely to try that for COP11.

Decision SC40-29: The Standing Committee agreed that

- i) **the COP11 National Report Form should be structured in line with the Goals and Strategies of the new 2009-2015 Ramsar Strategic Plan adopted at COP10 as Resolution X.1;**
- ii) **the indicators included in the COP11 NRF should speak to the Key Result Areas established by Resolution X.1 for each Strategy in the Plan;**
- iii) **an indicator or indicators concerning roll-out and uptake of the Changwon Declaration should be included;**
- iv) **for continuity, and to permit time-series analysis and report of implementation progress, COP11 NRF indicators should as far as possible be consistent with those in previous NRFs, particularly those of the COP10 NRF;**

- v) the advice and experience of the STRP should be sought concerning the utility and any adjustments to, or additional need for, indicators in relation particularly to the Panel's experience in using the COP10 NRF indicators in its analyses of effectiveness indicators; and
- vi) the advice of the CEPA Oversight Panel should likewise be sought concerning indicators for the CEPA Strategy of the Strategic Plan.

and requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft National Report Form along these lines for consideration for adoption by SC41 in 2010, distribution to Parties one year prior to COP11, and compilation by the Parties and submission by six months prior to the COP. The SC indicated that one item should be dedicated to the Changwon Declaration.

Agenda item 12: Review of COP10 and progress on COP11

178. **The Ramsar CEPA Programme Officer** noted that DOC. SC40-14 is drawn from an internal Secretariat review of COP10 and provides an aide memoire on many points of interest, as well as some lessons to be drawn for future COPs.
179. **The CEPA Programme Officer** presented a PowerPoint collection of photographs of COP10, highlighting the many positive aspects of the preparations, organization, and experience. She drew particular attention to the excellent organization, especially for the plenary sessions, the excellent set of volunteers, the exceptional entertainment and hospitality, the vigorous efforts to involve the public and make them aware of Ramsar and its values. Many of these aspects were unprecedented and make a very good model for future COP organizers to emulate.
180. **The Chair** expressed his gratitude for these compliments.
181. **The SRA for Europe** noted DOC. SC40-14 and reported that the Subgroup on COP11 has gone through the draft MOU to be negotiated with Romania, with the benefit of advice from Romania and Uganda. He suggested that SC urge the host country and Secretariat to try to narrow the date range for the COP, taking into account potential overlaps with other meetings and the availability of the facilities.
182. **The SRA** drew attention to two issues that the Subgroup on COP11 and the Standing Committee will have to address concerning the MOU, probably at SC41 – the duration of the COP and the programme structure (regional and technical sessions, etc.).
183. **Romania** said that he was very impressed by the organization of COP10 and congratulated Korea for that. He noted that COP11 will be an important challenge for Romania, and he hoped to approach COP10's high standard. The government will begin implementing national legislation for organizing the COP and will keep the Secretariat and Subgroup informed at all times.
184. **The Chair** hoped that COP11 will be an even bigger success than COP10 was.
185. **The DSG** asked for the remaining regional nominations to the Subgroup. North America was awaiting assent from Canada and will inform by e-mail, and Africa reiterated its wish to be represented by Uganda.

186. **Japan** inquired about how the feedback comments solicited at the end of COP10 will be used to improve future COPs and asked about the status of the Credentials Committee's recommendations for amending the Rules of Procedure.
187. **The DSG** replied that the intention is to recheck all comments received and provide those to the Subgroup on COP11. He noted that the Credentials Committee's recommendations for amending the Rules of Procedure, as recorded in the COP10 Conference Report, will be proposed in the draft Rules circulated with the COP11 documents for adoption by the Parties at the beginning of the COP.

Decision SC40-30: The Standing Committee endorsed the draft Memorandum of Understanding to be negotiated further between the Secretariat and Romania, the host country.

188. **The Chair** expressed his gratitude to the interpreters for having agreed to stay late again.

Day Three, 15 May 2009

Agenda item 13: Update on status of Ramsar sites

189. **The Chair** referred to DOC. SC40-15 on the status of Ramsar sites and invited the SRA for Europe, Tobias Salathé, to provide background on the issue.
190. **The SRA for Europe** recalled that in Resolution X.13 (2008) the Parties reaffirmed their commitment to implement Article 3.2 of the Convention by informing the Secretariat of any changes to the ecological character of Ramsar sites that had occurred, were occurring, or were likely to occur. He noted that the information provided in DOC. SC40-15 represents the Secretariat's annual update, as called for by SC35 (2006), but only includes changes reported since the publication of COP10 Information Paper DOC. 7 and the adoption of Resolution X.13 in November 2008, up to the end of March 2009.
191. **The SRA** noted that there is still some confusion about the purpose of the Montreux Record, which was set up at COP4 in Montreux (1990) to help Parties attract positive conservation attention and international support to Ramsar sites with problems, i.e., it was meant to be a helpful tool, not a black list. He urged the Parties to use the Montreux Record more frequently and more efficiently, and to review the cited problems at existing Record sites in the hope that some of them have been resolved; if so, the procedure for removing those sites from the Record could be carried out.
192. **The SRA** drew attention to Annex 2 listing Parties from which up-to-date information on Ramsar sites is needed urgently. He explained that the Ramsar Sites Information Service supplies authorities, academics, the public, etc., with an increasing array of information and products on Ramsar sites, including the most recent Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) and maps. The Parties have frequently affirmed the importance and value of Ramsar site information, and in Resolution VI.13 (1996) they committed themselves to submitting updated RISs at least every six years. He said that the easiest way to submit an updated RIS would be to update the most recent RIS only in those areas requiring new information.

193. **The DSG** passed on a message from the **Chair of the STRP** to the effect that the STRP15 meeting considered the available information about two Montreux Record sites in Algeria, Oasis d'Oulet Said and Lac Tonga, and concluded that the immediate threats to the sites have been resolved and a mechanism for long-term monitoring and management plans has been put in place. Thus the STRP would recommend removing those two sites from the Montreux Record.
194. **The DSG** reported that the STRP members felt that the current procedures for the STRP's role in the Montreux Record process are not working well and need to be streamlined, and recommendations will be brought forward to SC41.
195. **The Argentinean delegation** "thanked the Secretariat for the accomplished work and referred to paragraph 14 of the document, which refers to reports about possible modifications in the ecological character of the Ramsar sites received by the Secretariat from third parties. Argentina understands the information received by the Secretariat about possible changes in the ecological character of certain Ramsar sites does not represent 'cases under Article 3.2' since they were not presented by national Administrative Authorities, but by third parties (private persons, NGOs, media). As established by the above-mentioned article, the Contracting Parties and not third parties are responsible for informing about these modifications. The document makes reference to a complaint made by a private person, regarding the installment of an electric network in the Ramsar site Humedales del Chaco. The information was received by the Administrative Authority from the Convention Secretariat in April 2009 and the reply of the management authority of this site is pending in order to transmit the relevant information to the Secretariat." (Translation by the Secretariat)
196. **The SG** explained the Secretariat's procedure in the event of third-party information about potential changes at Ramsar sites – the only action that the Secretariat takes is to contact the Administrative Authority to seek clarification and offer assistance if appropriate. He agreed that only the Parties should report on such issues, and the Secretariat's purpose is to request the Party to make such a report if it has not done so. Normally, the Secretariat should have received a report of potential changes directly from the Administrative Authorities before receiving queries or information from third parties.
197. **Argentina** continued that, "in relation to paragraph 21, which mentions countries that sent RIS updates since COP10, Argentina sent the update of the RIS Laguna de Pozuelos by diplomatic note to the Ramsar Secretariat in December 2008. In relation to Annex I, which mentions the Ramsar Site Laguna de Llacanelo among the Ramsar sites included in the Montreux Record that are actively dealing with the changes in the ecological character, the authority responsible of the implementation of the Convention is working with the provincial authorities in order to remove the Ramsar site from the Montreux Record." (Translation by the Secretariat)
198. Concerning the Ramsar site Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay in the Republic of Uruguay, **Argentina** requested that the following statement be recorded in the report of the meeting. (Translation by the Secretariat)

"The Ramsar site Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay is located on the left margin of the Uruguay river and therefore it is included in the area of application of an international instrument between Argentina and Uruguay, the River Uruguay

Statute (1975), which regulates matters related to the Uruguay river and its influence areas. There is a controversy between Argentina and Uruguay regarding the authorization approved unilaterally by Uruguay for the construction of pulp mills on the left bank of the Uruguay River in the Fray Bentos zone, next to the Ramsar site Estero de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay. This controversy is being adjudicated before the International Court of Justice.”

199. **Uruguay** requested that the following statement be recorded in the report of the meeting. (Translation by the Secretariat)

“Thank you Mr Chairman. We also thank the preparation of the document SC40-15 by the Secretariat and since the distinguished delegation of Argentina referred to Ramsar Site no 1433 Esteros de Farrapos e Islas del Río Uruguay we wish to make the following clarifications:

“First, we would like to highlight that Uruguay sets the highest priority on the conservation and sustainable use of this Ramsar site, and therefore besides its designation as a Ramsar site in 2004, in November 2008 the President of the Republic decreed its incorporation into the National System of Protected Areas, which entails even more activities for its conservation and harmonization with the sustainable use by local communities and which also allows us to have more updated information in order to prevent possible modifications of the ecological character of the site.

“On the other hand, Mr Chairman, in accordance with the information provided by Uruguay in the 35th Standing Committee meeting, we would like to reiterate the following points:

- Several national and international organizations have performed rigorous environmental impact assessments which have clearly shown that the functioning of the pulp mill does not cause any negative impacts on the environment nor fundamental modifications in the water quality of the Uruguay River.
- Strict controls and permanent monitoring of the fulfillment of the environmental requirements by the pulp mill, located downstream from the Ramsar site, are undertaken

We will appreciate that this intervention is included in the meeting report. Thank you very much”

200. **Argentina** expressed its disagreement with some affirmations made by the distinguished delegation of Uruguay in relation to the site Estero de Farrapos e Islas del río Uruguay and retained the right to send its written answer opportunely, and asked that it be included to the annex of the meeting report.
201. **Uruguay** responded that, “in relation to the last intervention by Argentina, we understand that the meeting report should reflect discussions that occurred during the meeting and therefore it is not appropriate to include in the annex the request of Argentina (answer to intervention of Uruguay). We remain open, however, to continue talking about this subject in the next SC meeting. Thank you very much.”

202. **Uruguay** reported that a proposal has been submitted to the Secretariat for the removal of the Bañados del Este y Franja Costera from the Montreux Record.
203. **Marshall Islands** reported that Australia is preparing an information update on The Coorong Ramsar site for the Secretariat; updates were supplied in December 2006 and October 2008 and will be provided every six months henceforward.
204. **Brazil** reported that RISs are being updated and asked for a cross-reference table between the old Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance and the current ones. **The SRA** noted that the old and new Criteria can be correlated almost completely and that a cross-reference can be provided
205. **Mexico** reported that the Secretariat's information about Laguna Costera El Caymán has been received and all necessary steps have been taken to determine whether there is in fact a threat; a report will be sent.
206. **Japan** reported that updated RISs are currently in preparation and the SRA for Asia/Oceania will be informed soon.
207. **The SRA for Europe** asked the Parties to use the latest version of the Ramsar Information Sheet, available on the Web site, when updating their old ones.
208. **The DSG** recalled that the STRP's Work Plan includes the task of reviewing the Montreux Record Questionnaire to see whether it can be improved.
209. **The SG** noted that for some Ramsar sites we have no information whatsoever. This usually happens upon the accession of a new Party, since the depositary, UNESCO, cannot require an RIS in addition to the name and map stipulated in Article 1.4. He looked forward to getting the Standing Committee members' help in obtaining RISs from those Parties.
210. **The Chair** summarized that the SC needs to make a decision that requests the Parties to provide the needed information on Ramsar sites cited in Resolution X.13 and DOC. SC40-15 and commits the Regional Representatives to assisting the Secretariat in obtaining missing information.

Decision SC40-31: The Standing Committee welcomed the information provided by Parties at this meeting and requested all Parties concerned to forward updated information promptly to the Secretariat on the current situation at the Ramsar sites mentioned in Resolution X.13 and DOC. SC40-15 paras. 5, 13, and 14, and furthermore instructed the Secretariat to follow up on these matters with the respective Administrative Authorities.

Decision SC40-32: The Committee welcomed the information provided on Montreux Record sites in Algeria, Argentina, and Uruguay and urged all Parties with Montreux Record sites, as listed in DOC. SC40-15 annex I, to take steps as a matter of priority to progress the resolution of the problems at those sites and their removal from the Record, and furthermore requested the Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee to follow up on this matter with the Parties in their regions. The SC requested Parties with ideas on how the Secretariat can best assist

and encourage Parties in such activities to make their suggestions known to the Secretariat.

Decision SC40-33: The Standing Committee recalled the Parties' commitments in Resolution VI.13 to update the Ramsar Information Sheets on their Ramsar sites at least every six years, encouraged the Parties listed in DOC. SC40-15 annex II to provide their updated information as soon as possible, most especially for those Ramsar sites for which there may be no information recorded at all, and requested all Parties to continue this practice of updating their site information regularly.

Agenda item 15.1: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

211. **The CEPA Programme Officer, Sandra Hails**, reviewed the CEPA Oversight Panel's report, as presented in DOC. SC40-19, and explained the Panel's recommendations concerning the composition of the Panel and the amended criteria for the selection of members. She also reviewed the Panel's proposed Work Plan for 2009-2012 and sought the SC's approval, and she asked the SC to take note of the urgent need for an effective network amongst Ramsar Regional Centres in order to share experiences, work plans, and other relevant materials.

Decision SC40-34: The Standing Committee approved the CEPA Oversight Panel's recommendations concerning its composition, endorsed the Panel's proposed Work Plan, and took note of the need for the development of an effective network of the Ramsar Regional Centres.

Agenda item 15.2: Review of the utility of World Wetlands Day

212. **The CEPA Programme Officer** recalled that SC36 requested an assessment of the scope and effectiveness of World Wetlands Day, which has become widely used over the past eleven years as a means for authorities and the public to spread the message about the wise use of wetlands and the Convention, but which requires ever-increasing amounts of staff time to keep up with the growth of its popularity.
213. **The CEPA Programme Officer** made a PowerPoint presentation on the results of the WWD assessment that was recently completed and which is available on the Ramsar Web site. It was performed by a consultant based upon WWD reports on the Web site, National Reports, and responses to a survey. She reported on the assessment's main conclusions and recommendations, which were all generally positive, and sought the SC's views on producing a popular brochure on its results. (The PowerPoint presentation is available on the Ramsar Web site.)
214. **The SG** paid tribute to the financial support provided by the Danone Group for the production of World Wetlands Day materials since its beginning. He said that WWD is very important but that it takes up a lot of staff time, especially in a COP year. This past year a volunteer covered the distribution of WWD materials whilst the Secretariat was at the COP, and it is hoped that a similar solution can be found for the next COP.
215. **The SG** asked for understanding if there have been delays in preparing WWD reports for the Web site; the Secretariat receives a wealth of such reports but has very limited staff time to deal with them above regular duties. This year, the webmaster had been assigned

almost exclusively to the Web site conversion, and it seemed possible that no reports could be posted at all.

216. **Mexico** reported that WWD celebrations are seen as a very important instrument to make the Convention better known within the country, and the AA has been trying to ensure that all Ramsar sites celebrate the event. She noted that the graphs in the assessment do not reflect important differences among countries, because the information is provided by the governments whereas many local WWD activities may not have been reported to the governments. Thus the impact of WWD may be much larger than estimated. **The DSG** clarified that in principle all reports are posted on the Web site, from both governments and civil society, and all were studied in the assessment.
217. **WWF International** affirmed that he regularly learns of WWD events and use of materials that were not communicated to the Secretariat, so the actual impact of WWD is far larger than shown in the assessment. He always encourages actors to report their activities, but when these are not posted on the Web site promptly, it causes confusion. He urged that they should be posted as quickly as possible, as it is important for actors to see their efforts shown on the Web promptly. He supported the idea of preparing a popular brochure on the WWD assessment report in the three official languages.
218. **The Chair** agreed that the impact of WWD is certainly much greater than just those reported. He suggested that the SC encourage the Secretariat to prepare a popular version of the assessment report as soon as possible, taking into account the elements mentioned in DOC. SC40-20 concerning identifying WWD targets, assessing event impacts, providing useful suggestions, and improving reporting by a template. He urged the SC to include thanks to Danone in its decision.
219. **The CEPA Programme Officer** agreed that there are many activities that are not known to the AAs and drew attention to the pôle-relais network of wetlands in France which encourages and coordinates WWD celebrations across the country. She suggested that the AAs in other countries could develop such a network, too.
220. **The CEPA Programme Officer** noted that the Secretariat has very limited capacity and there needs to be a partnership between the Secretariat and the national focal points in the AAs to keep the momentum building. She said that the staff is very aware of the need to post reports promptly and that the webmaster is frequently frustrated by the inability to do so. She noted that we have been looking into on-line self-reporting but have found that technically difficult at this stage and too impersonal in any case. She noted that there is only one CEPA Officer and one webmaster, both with other ongoing duties, and so the SC may need to think about how to report WWD activities in order to keep the momentum building.
221. **Thailand** summarized national WWD activities in that country.
222. **The Chair** said that the responsibility to promote World Wetlands Day lies with both the Secretariat and the Parties and suggested that the SC's decision should urge Parties to respond to the Secretariat's request for reporting.

Decision SC40-35: The Standing Committee encouraged the Secretariat to prepare an attractive, popular version of the assessment report on World Wetlands Day as

soon as possible, taking into account the elements mentioned in DOC. SC40-20 concerning identifying WWD targets, assessing event impacts, providing useful suggestions, and improving reporting by a template. The Committee urged the Parties to report actively to the Secretariat on WWD events in their countries. The SC expressed its gratitude to the Danone Group for having provided financial support for the production of WWD materials for the past eleven years and encouraged the Danone Group to continue doing so.

Agenda item 15.3: Themes for World Wetlands Day 2011 and 2012

223. **The CEPA Programme Officer** recalled that the Standing Committee has chosen “Wetlands, Biodiversity, and Climate Change” as the theme for WWD 2010 and has chosen “Wetlands and Forests”, subject to confirmation at this meeting, as the theme for 2011, partly in recognition of the UN International Year of Forests.
224. She also noted that 2011 will be the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention; she mentioned that the Ramsar Regional Centre in Ramsar, Iran, intends to hold a commemorative festival on WWD and she encouraged other Parties to plan something in honor of the 40th anniversary as well. She mentioned that 2011 will also be the 20th anniversary of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet).
225. **The CEPA Programme Officer** explained that a decision on the theme for 2012 was not required at this time, but she asked the members to begin considering the theme of “Wetlands and Tourism” as a timely and appropriate topic that has not been addressed before. She noted that, since some WWD themes have been coordinated with the themes of meetings of the Conference of the Parties in the same years, Romania will wish to be part of the discussions. **Tanzania** urged that the theme could be improved to “Wetlands and Ecotourism”. **The CEPA Programme Officer** observed that tourism and ecotourism are new tasks in the work plan of the STRP.
226. **The SG** described the many linkages between wetlands and forests, the mutual benefits of their good management, and their relevance to climate change. **Switzerland** agreed that that theme could also be easily combined with the 40th anniversary by emphasizing that the Convention has evolved from wetlands and waterbirds exclusively to the broad mandate at river basin level.
227. **Thailand** noted that tropical countries have many flooded forests that are very important.
228. **The Netherlands** supported Switzerland’s view on the appropriateness of combining the forest theme with the 40th anniversary and suggested bringing in the Changwon Declaration as well. He noted that the focus will be upon other forests, too, not just flooded forests, and upon their role in water regulation, etc. He welcomed the news of the Democratic Republic of Congo’s recent designation of a very large rain forest.
229. **Cameroon** supported the SG’s mention of a planned World Wetlands Week in Seychelles and noted that that could be repeated annually on a rotation basis through the regions. **The SG** explained the concept of a World Water Week to be held in a specific country each year, beginning with Seychelles in 2010, as an opportunity to highlight wetlands and the Convention throughout a whole country.

230. **Wetlands International** supported the themes of forests and tourism, especially as they are in line with the CBD's proposed clusters for 2012 and 2013 (in addition to biodiversity and mountains).
231. **WWF International** urged the Secretariat and the Parties to engage and mobilize in support of the 40th anniversary, for the Ramsar, Iran, festival and elsewhere, not just on World Wetlands Day but all year. It will be a great opportunity to increase the visibility and global awareness of the Convention. He observed that 2011 will also be the 50th anniversary of WWF, whose first project was Doñana, now a Ramsar site, and he encouraged the Secretariat to hold high level discussions with WWF about organizing something in commemoration of that.
232. **The Chair** summarized the issues and proposed wording for an SC decision.
233. **Japan** noted its support for WWD at national and local levels, with a lot of workshops, symposia, etc. Japan suggested that, to obtain a wider involvement of the public in 2012, it would be preferable to find a theme that is wider and closer to the mandate of the Convention, and looked forward to further discussion of the issue at SC41.

Decision SC40-36: The Standing Committee confirmed the suggested theme for World Wetlands Day 2011 as "Wetlands and Forests"; noted the proposed theme for 2012 of "Wetlands and Tourism" or "Wetlands and Ecotourism" and determined to revisit the subject at its 41st meeting; urged the Parties to consider planning some special local, national, and regional celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Convention; requested the Secretariat to prepare a suitable 40th anniversary commemoration in collaboration with the Parties and the International Organization Partners; and noted the concept of holding a World Wetlands Week in Seychelles in 2010 and urged other Parties to consider doing the same.

Agenda item 15.4: Update on business partnership activities

234. **The DSG** introduced Nathalie Rizzotti, the Project Officer, funded by the Danone Group, who is managing a number of field projects and other collaborative efforts with Danone and supporting the Secretariat's communications team, most notably by leading on the production of the recent Ramsar video.
235. **The Project Officer** made a PowerPoint presentation explaining the purpose of collaborative relationships with private sector companies and summarizing the activities under the Secretariat's agreements with the Danone Group and the Star Alliance. The Fund "Danone Evian pour l'eau" was begun in 1998 and has contributed €250,000 a year since 2002 to the Convention's work; its objectives are to promote the Convention around the world (WWD, etc.), promote concrete actions in the field (with technical and best-practice workshops, etc.), and develop a network of experts for water management (through the Evian Encounters workshops, the Ramsar Award, etc.).
236. **The Project Officer** reported that Danone is providing financial support for the conversion of the Ramsar Web site into a different technology which, it is hoped, will make it more user-friendly. The structure of the revised site is nearing completion and it is hoped that the content migration can begin shortly; following that there will be a period of editorial clean-up of the migration and, if that goes well, the new site can be launched at

that time. [She reported that the launch might be ready by the end of May, but that has subsequently been put back somewhat.]

237. **The Project Officer** described the Danone project “Ecoles de protection de l’eau” which is providing €680,000 over three years to support three projects focusing on the wise use of water resources at Ramsar sites in Argentina, Nepal, and Thailand. For the project “Fund pour la Nature” Danone is providing €747,000 for a collaboration with IUCN and Ramsar supporting programmes to store carbon by restoring wetlands.
238. Concerning the “Biosphere Connections” partnership with Star Alliance, **the Project Officer** reported that Ramsar, IUCN, and the UNESCO MAB Programme are each benefiting by about €25,000 per year in subsidized airplane tickets (not directly for staff). (The full presentation is available on the Ramsar Web site.)
239. **The SG** reported that he recently addressed the Danone General Assembly of some 2,000 shareholders, which provided the opportunity to talk about Ramsar with business sector actors and convince them that their own businesses depend upon wetlands.
240. **Argentina** expressed gratitude for the presentation and especially for the Danone project in Argentina. Argentina pointed out the importance of having adopted Resolution X.12 at COP10 in Korea, which gives a framework to the relations between the Convention and the business sector. Argentina “reiterated what was expressed at COP10 regarding the essential participation of the Administrative Authorities in the project approval process agreed by the Secretariat with the business sector, as well as the strengthening of the role of the states in its evolution, which are by definition the responsible to the international community.” (Translation by the Secretariat)
241. **WWF International** congratulated the Secretariat for this exemplary model of a long-term collaborative relationship with the business sector, and he reiterated the importance for the Secretariat to have very clear rules for considering potential relationships in the future. In situations where a fast and clear reaction is needed, such rules would be very helpful.
242. **The SG** recalled that he has always said that the Secretariat would never enter into collaboration with the business sector without the Parties’ approval of principles for doing so. Those principles are now embodied in Resolution X.12. He said that, in all future cases, the Secretariat will always investigate the respective companies thoroughly before asking for the Standing Committee’s endorsement, with a good understanding of the potential benefits as well as the risks.
243. **The Chair** summarized the discussion thus far and formulated wording for a decision.

Decision SC40-37: The Standing Committee noted the presentation on the progress of partnerships with the business sector and the conversion of the Ramsar Web site, and it welcomed the activities reported. The Committee emphasized the importance of the principles for partnerships with the private sector in Resolution X.12 and affirmed that whenever the need might arise in concluding a partnership agreement, Resolution X.12 will guide the Committee’s decisions.

Agenda item 16: Date and venue of the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee

244. **The Chair** recalled that the Management Working Group considered the venue of the next Standing Committee meeting and that its recommendations have been circulated in the MWG's report.
245. **The SG** proposed the week of 26-30 April, or failing that, 3-7 May, as the most convenient dates in 2010.
246. **The Chair** clarified that there are three issues before the Committee: the development of generic guidance for all Parties wishing to host an SC meeting; the invitation from Georgia to host SC41 in 2010; and the two options for the dates.
247. **Argentina** requested that its declaration be included in the report of the meeting. (Translation by the Secretariat)

“Argentina, on behalf of the GRULAC, would like to reiterate what already was expressed during the first day of the SC meeting and, in this sense, points out that the note presented by Argentina, in its capacity as Coordinator of GRULAC-Environment, in March 2009 to the SC of the Ramsar Convention, refers to the concern of the countries of the region about the possibility of the SC taking place outside Gland, Switzerland. This situation would cause that our delegates who participate as observers would not be able to participate in the meetings that take place in far countries or that do not have diplomatic representations, given the lack of funding by the Secretariat, and would be detrimental to an adequate follow-up of the work of the Committee. However, we would like to clearly state that this concern does not have any relation to the offer made by Georgia to host the next SC meeting.”

248. **Switzerland** observed that, because of international meetings in the first weeks of May, the last week of April would be preferable. **China** concurred.
249. **Paraguay** supported Argentina's intervention. **Ecuador** requested that the GRULAC letter also be included in the report of the meeting. He said that the main issue is the participation of the Parties in decisions taken by the Standing Committee; many Parties are observers and can only be represented by their missions. It would be less costly for the Secretariat to hold the meetings in Gland. Ecuador thanked Georgia warmly for its offer, but urged that future meetings continue to be held in Gland.
250. **The Czech Republic** welcomed the kind invitation from Georgia and stressed the MWG's recommendation that generic guidance be developed for Parties wishing to host SC meetings in future. **Finland** and **Norway** supported the MWG's recommendations.
251. **The Chair** summarized the proposed wording of the SC's decision, based upon the Management Working Group's recommendations.

Decision SC40-38: The Standing Committee:

- i) **requested that the Secretariat prepare and issue generic guidance to all Parties concerning the process, timelines, host country responsibilities, and indicative costs of offering to host a Standing Committee meeting, as the basis for their consideration of making any such offer;**

- ii) directed any country making an offer to host an SC meeting to provide clear information on the matters in i) above to the Secretariat and Standing Committee at the time of making the offer;
- iii) thanked the government of Georgia for its offer to host the 41st meeting of the SC in 2010;
- iv) provisionally accepted Georgia's offer, subject to satisfactory provision to the Secretariat and Standing Committee not later than 15 August 2009 of the following information –
 - establishment of a Task Force for SC41 preparations and identification of a Coordinator who acts as the main contact point for the Secretariat;
 - venue, suitability (capacity, meeting room and support facilities), and accessibility (including travel and transfer arrangements from international/nearest airport);
 - visa issuing for delegates;
 - suitable and sufficient hotel accommodations (and their costs) at or close to the meeting venue;
 - confirmation of full additional cost coverage (including the preparation, travel, and participation costs of Secretariat staff; full additional costs of Ramsar's professional interpreters; additional travel and nights of accommodation for SC members, as necessary), including venue and venue services, and information as to whether any cost-coverage will also be offered to observer Contracting Parties wishing to participate;
- v) requested the Chair and Vice-Chair of SC, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, and the Secretary General to consider the information provided for above, and on behalf of the SC to confirm or otherwise that it provides the appropriate basis for full acceptance of the hosting offer;
- vi) decided that, if it is not possible to make this confirmation, the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee should be held in Gland, Switzerland; and
- vii) determined that the preferable dates for the meeting will be the week of 26-30 April 2010.

252. **Georgia** confirmed that all of the requested information and assurances will be provided by the end of July 2009 and that the proposed dates would be satisfactory.

Agenda item 17: Adoption of the report of the meeting

253. **The DSG** noted that draft reports of the first two days of the plenary sessions have been distributed, and he explained the Standing Committee's established practice, whereby the meeting will adopt the draft reports page-by-page, raising only substantial matters by intervention and with editorial corrections to be passed directly to the rapporteur, and delegate the SC Chair to approve the third day's report on the SC's behalf.

254. **The Chair** led the meeting through a consideration of the first two days' draft reports.

Decision SC40-39: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the first two days of the meeting, as amended, and empowered the Chair to approve the report of the third day on its behalf.

255. **Switzerland** wished the report of the meeting to include the SC's thanks to the rapporteur. **The Chair** expressed the SC's gratitude to the interpreters, who have stayed late to accommodate the SC's discussions.
256. **China** suggested that in future for any Standing Committee documents prepared from outside the Secretariat the authors should be identified in a by-line under the title.

Agenda item 18: Any other business

257. **Tanzania** proposed that a group photograph should be taken of all participants. This was agreed.
258. **The DSG** presented the Convention's fourth Wetland Person of International Importance certificate to **Dr Makoto Komoda**, who will soon be retiring from the Japan Wildlife Research Centre and has been closely involved with the Ramsar Convention for the twenty years since he was posted at the Japanese embassy in Berne in July 1989. Over that time he collaborated in the preparations for Ramsar COP5 in Kushiro, served on the STRP in the 1996-1999 triennium, and participated in many COP, Standing Committee and other meetings over the years. Dr Komoda will continue to be involved with the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation and hopes to continue working with the Convention.

Agenda item 19: Closing remarks

259. **The SC Chair** applauded the good atmosphere throughout the meeting, which has led to its successful conclusion. He felt that the SC can now proceed with good momentum towards COP11. He urged all Parties to cooperate with one another and the Standing Committee and all to contribute to the success of COP11.
260. **The SG** renewed his thanks to all of the participants, as well as to the interpreters, the rapporteur, and the Secretariat team who prepared the meeting for the delegates. He said that effective communication is the key requirement for success and he hoped to improve our communications. He asked all participants to register for meetings on time. He expressed the need for improved day-to-day communications with the regional teams, which heretofore have tended only to be on negative matters; he urged the Parties to inform the Secretariat about positive things, too, so that they can be publicized and serve as examples for others. He encouraged Parties to inform not only on what they have done, but also on how they have done it; in the development of a new National Wetlands Policy, for example, the process is almost as important as the product, and the lessons can help other Parties as well. He wished all the participants a safe trip home.
261. **Wetlands International** recognized the contributions of the Secretariat's logistics team and joined in applauding their preparations.
262. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** thanked the SC Chair for his able leadership and thanked the Secretary General and his team for a successful meeting.
263. **The Chair** closed the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee.