

**Report on Resolution XI.16, *Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention*
(with Review Committee terms of reference annexed)**

Action requested:

- The Standing Committee is invited to note the report of the Review Committee.

Introduction

1. Ramsar Contracting Parties at the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11, Bucharest 2012) adopted Resolution XI.16 on *Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention*. Within the Resolution they requested a review of the 'delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention'. The findings of the review will be presented to COP12 in 2015. Given that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has undergone changes since its inception to adapt to the changing needs of Contracting Parties, this review represents an opportunity to improve STRP functions.
2. As a result the Review Committee, chaired by the United States of America, was established during the 46th Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC46) to guide the process. Terms of reference (TORs) drafted for the group, which outline the approach and timelines for accomplishing the review, are attached at Annex 2. The TORs call for the engagement of a consultant(s) by the Ramsar Secretariat to assist with the review process.

Progress since SC46

3. Following SC46, the Secretariat drafted TORs to engage a consultant(s), with input from the Review Committee. The Secretariat has worked with the Review Committee to ensure that the work to be undertaken fully reflects their concerns and interests, and revised TORs for the consultancy (attached as Annex 1) were agreed in January 2014. The work is to be divided between two consultants, a senior consultant experienced in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and a consultant experienced in organizational management and systems. The specific tasks for each are outlined.
4. The Secretariat will advertise the two consultant positions and select a shortlist of CVs with recommendations for the Review Committee to approve, so that the contracts can be quickly finalized, considering the need to present the results of their work to SC48.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for consultancy support to the Ramsar Convention's *Review Committee on Ensuring Efficient Delivery of Scientific and Technical Advice and Support to the Convention (Resolution XI.16)*

Background

In Resolution XI.16, the Contracting Parties at Ramsar's 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11, Bucharest, 2012) approved 'a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention', the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12).

The STRP is now 20 years old, and has adapted over time to the changing needs and priorities of the Convention. However, Resolution XI.16 made clear that Parties believe there are opportunities for significant improvements in the delivery, uptake, and implementation of scientific and technical guidance. Parties also indicated that all bodies of the Convention have roles to play in ensuring that scientific and technical advice and support is delivered in ways that support effective (and more efficient) implementation of the objectives of the Convention, and that it is necessary to reassess the priorities and focus of current Convention mechanisms, including but not limited to the STRP.

The Review Committee, which is chaired by the United States of America (USA) and reports to the Convention's Management Working Group, was established during the 46th meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee (SC46) in April 2013. Its members, listed below, reached broad agreement during SC46 on Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Review Committee, which were finalized after the meeting and shared with all members. A key element of these TORs was the option of using expert consultants to support the Review Committee on specific tasks.

Members of the Review Committee are interested members of the Management Working Group of the Standing Committee and any other interested Contracting Parties, including Australia, Cambodia, Chile, Finland, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the USA. Also participating are the STRP Chair, the Secretariat's Scientific and Technical Support Officer and the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA). The Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisors were also asked to participate in the review process, as well as two consultants.

Expertise and profile of the consultants

To ensure their independence and avoid potential conflicts of interest, the consultants may not be current or previous direct employees of the Secretariat, and may not have been hired previously by the Secretariat to implement the Ramsar Convention or the work of its bodies or processes.

The consultants should have the following experience and profile:

Consultancy 1

Involves primary responsibility for overseeing the work, and requires experience of working for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and experience and expertise in:

- undertaking survey-based reviews of government or intergovernmental processes and issues;
- conducting field surveys and collecting data to establish baseline conditions;

- interpreting and reporting on data collected: this can include detailed assessment of data, often using software modelling packages;
- writing of detailed scientific reports in a manner that can be understood by non-technical people;
- establishing dialogue and formal lines of communication with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regulators and sub-contractors;
- national and sub-national implementation of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; and
- the roles and responsibilities of MEAs, and science-policy advice processes and issues in other relevant MEAs.

Consultancy 2

Involves primary responsibility for management and systems issues, following the advice of the MEA-experienced consultant as needed, and requires experience and expertise in:

- undertaking survey-based reviews of government or intergovernmental processes and issues;
- conducting field surveys and collecting data to establish baseline conditions;
- interpreting and reporting on data collected: this can include detailed assessment of data, often using software modelling packages;
- writing of detailed scientific reports in a manner that can be understood by non-technical people; and
- establishing dialogue and formal lines of communication with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regulators and sub-contractors.

Work to be undertaken

The overall work of the Review Committee is planned to be undertaken in three phases. The Consultants will make substantive contributions to a number of tasks in Phases 1 and 2.

General approach and outputs

The consultants will review all the ways in which Contracting Parties' scientific and technical needs are currently identified, how they seek advice and guidance, and how different scientific and technical products are prepared, disseminated and used. They will identify the current effectiveness of advice and guidance products, and the real and perceived barriers, gaps and limitations to the communication of this advice.

They will consider and provide recommendations on:

- possible changes to improve the effectiveness of the current Ramsar scientific and technical bodies and processes; and
- whether additional mechanisms, processes or bodies, complementary to existing Ramsar bodies and processes, could effectively enhance regional, national and local training, capacity building and implementation.

Specific tasks to be undertaken

Note. The task numbering below is taken from the TORs of the overall work of the Review Committee itself and does not include all tasks listed, since many will be the responsibility of Committee Members themselves. Timelines have been adjusted since the Review Committee TORs were finalized. Tasks pertaining to each consultant are outlined below. Where a task involves the participation of both consultants, it is indicated.

Phase 1

Task 2¹ (March/April 2014)

Review the application and utility of Ramsar guidance and the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritized, and converted into tools and guidance for the range of implementation stakeholders, and the extent to which the tools and guidance are disseminated to, and taken up by, identified stakeholders.

Consultant 2: Construct the survey in a manner that it builds on previous reviews², using the information collected from them and prioritizing constituencies which are missing but should be surveyed.

Methods: Seeking the support as needed of Senior Regional Advisors, the STRP Chair and the Scientific and Technical Support Officer, undertake a range of surveys, including at relevant STRP guidance users' meetings and through webinars, telephone and email, of the priority target audiences identified³, National Focal Points, STRP National Focal Points and Ramsar Site Managers (if they are not already identified within a priority target audience, and being aware that a wide range of people are considered to be 'Ramsar Site Managers').

The survey will be based on a short series of questions, to be prepared by the Consultant and agreed with the Management Working Group's Chair. The questions should:

- assess individuals' awareness of, access to, and use of scientific and technical materials (primarily but not exclusively those prepared by and through the STRP);
- assess their interest in and use of the current range of formats used for STRP products; and
- seek to determine what type(s) of scientific and technical advice, and in what form of product or process, would be most helpful in implementing the Convention's objectives.

As well as directly targeting identified audiences, the survey could be distributed online (web, listserves, questionnaire tools such as SurveyMonkey) to reach wider audiences.

Task 3 (April 2014)

Consultants 1 and 2: Review the roles of bodies and processes of the Convention providing scientific support and delivery, including the STRP, STRP National Focal Points, National Focal Points, the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel, the Secretariat, Ramsar Advisory Missions, Regional Initiatives and International Organization Partners.

¹ **Note.** Phase 1, Task 1 is the Review Committee's Task 1: 'Identify priority target audiences of scientific and technical advice. Note: XI.16 paragraph 9 provides a list of suggested priority targets for consideration (see footnote 3). Timeframe March 2014.'

² See 'An evaluation of the use and utility of Ramsar guidance' at http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/Use_utility_Ramsar_guidance_report.pdf.

³ Resolution XI.16 paragraph 9 identified the following target audiences to include *inter alia*:

- managers of individual wetland sites, as well as managers of networks of wetlands such as on migratory waterbird flyways;
- wetland policy makers and those responsible for regulating use of and impacts on wetlands;
- policy makers in other sectors such as water, agriculture, health, urban development, and energy;
- stakeholders and local communities who may depend upon wetlands and wetland ecosystem services.
- educators and researchers; and
- private sector organizations.

Methods:

Consultant 1: Undertake a literature review of Ramsar guidance documents and other materials to identify the types of guidance and descriptions of roles and responsibilities for each of the bodies listed above.

Consultant 2: Conduct, as needed and appropriate, short interviews with the STRP Chair and Vice Chair, current and former STRP members and observers, the CEPA Oversight Panel, Senior Regional Advisors, the Deputy Secretary General, the Scientific and Technical Support Officer and the Regional Initiatives.

Task 4 (May 2014)

Consultant 1: Review the means and processes that other MEAs' scientific bodies use to provide scientific and technical advice to those Conventions to support their implementation. Consider other bodies' best practices regarding scientific and technical matters, as well as data collection.

Methods: Conduct interviews with Secretariat staff of other MEAs and the chairs of their scientific bodies (and particularly those of the other biodiversity-related conventions), to identify how they provide scientific and technical advice to support implementation of the Conventions, and the merits and effectiveness of those methods, in order to identify good practices which are relevant to Ramsar.

Task 5

Consultant 2: Review means through which other (non-MEA) bodies provide scientific and technical advice to their constituencies to support implementation of their activities.

Methods: Conduct interviews with leaders of a selected group of inter-governmental organisations, wetland organizations, advertising agencies, information clearing houses, philanthropic organizations, and scientific societies (such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Society of Wetland Scientists), as appropriate, to identify how they provide scientific and technical advice to their constituencies to support implementation of their activities, in order to identify good practices which are relevant to Ramsar.

Phase 2

Task 1 (March 2014 for Task)

Consultant 1: Compile and submit to the Review Committee a report on the results of the surveys of MEAs and others, identifying common themes and views, priority users, which products are useful, which distribution channels for STRP products are effective, and proposing options for the refinement of Convention processes.

Consultant 2: Compile and synthesize information collected in the surveys of individuals and other MEAs, and in the literature review (Tasks 2-5 above).

Methods: Compile and synthesize, and prepare a report on, the results of the surveys of individuals and literature and others, identifying common themes emerging as well as areas of common views; and provide this information and, as appropriate, who are the priority users, what products are useful, what are the effective distribution channels for STRP products, and options for the refinement of Convention processes, to the Review Committee.

Task 3

Compile and synthesize ideas collected from Review Committee members in response to the ideas and recommendations, which they provide as Task 2.⁴

Consultant 2: Compile and synthesize views and recommendations from the Review Committee resulting from Task 2, and prepare a report identifying areas of convergence in views and areas identified as concerns, to form the basis of the Review Committee's further considerations regarding the preparation of a draft COP12 Resolution on the matters raised in Resolution XI.16.

It is recognized that the Review Committee may call upon Consultant 2 as needed (and as resources permit) to provide additional support, as the review work progresses.

⁴ Task 2 (September 2014) is for the Review Committee, to consider information collected and compiled by the Consultant. Share ideas and provide recommendations for:

- ways to address issues identified by the data, including, *inter alia*, adding/deleting scientific products from the current suite of scientific and technical products produced by STRP, CEPA, the Regional Initiatives and Centres, and the Secretariat, to effectively support Contracting Parties' ability to advance implementation of the Convention;
- possible refinements or changes to all relevant Convention processes to facilitate effective communication and uptake of Convention tools and advice to enhance capacity for implementation; and
- any other complementary mechanisms which might be established.

Annex 2

Terms of Reference for the Review Committee on Ensuring Efficient Delivery of Scientific and Technical Advice and Support to the Convention Established in Resolution XI.16

Background:

In Resolution XI.16 the Contracting Parties agreed to undertake “a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention”, and to report on its findings to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The STRP is now 20 years old and has adapted over time to the changing needs and priorities of the Convention. However, XI.16 made clear that Parties believe there are opportunities for significant improvements in the delivery, uptake, and implementation of scientific and technical guidance. It was also indicated by Parties that all bodies of the Convention have roles to play in ensuring that scientific and technical support is delivered in ways that support effective implementation of the objectives of the Convention, and that it is necessary to reassess the priorities and focus of current Convention mechanisms, including but not limited to the STRP. The Review Committee reports to the Management Working Group and will provide readouts at each of its meetings and otherwise as requested.

Participants:

Members of the Review Committee are interested members of the Management Working Group and any other interested Contracting Parties. As of SC46 these include:

Contracting Parties: Australia, Cambodia, Chile, Finland, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, UAE, USA

Also Participating: STRP Chair, STRP Support Officer, Ramsar Regional Center East Asia

Other Requested Participants: Secretariat Senior Regional Advisors, Consultant

Guiding Considerations:

Throughout their efforts the Committee Members will keep in mind the Parties’ overarching shared goal of enhancing implementation of the Convention. In so doing, and to accomplish the tasks below, Members will seek to identify:

- priority target audiences from among the range of implementing agents who play roles in achieving the wise use of wetlands;
- priority STRP tasks and products
- means to improve awareness of STRP products and expertise by priority target audiences
- means to improve access to STRP products and expertise by priority target audiences
- means to improve use of STRP products and expertise by priority target audiences
- means to improve timeliness of STRP products
- appropriate roles for Convention bodies (e.g., STRP, CEPA Oversight Panel, the Secretariat, National Focal Points, Ramsar Advisory Missions, and Regional Initiatives).

Tasks:

Phase One

Task 1. Identify priority target audiences of scientific and technical advice. Note: XI.16 para 9 provides a list of suggested priority targets for consideration.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: In person meeting at SC46 to reach agreement.

Timeframe: During SC46.

Task 2. Review the application and utility of Ramsar guidance, and the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritized, and converted into tools for the range of on-the-ground stakeholders. Construct the survey in a manner that it improves upon the last two reviews, using the information collected from the past surveys and prioritizing constituencies that are missing, but should be surveyed.

Responsible individual(s): A Consultant contracted by the Secretariat, and selected by the Management Working Group Chair in consultation with the Chair of the Review Committee, STRP Chair, STRP Support Officer, Regional Senior Advisors.

Method for accomplishing this task:

Consultant (with support as needed from Regional Senior Advisors): will undertake a variety of methods, including surveys at relevant STRP guidance users meetings, webinars, and telephone surveys, among others, of the priority target audiences identified, as well as National Focal Points, National STRP Focal Points, and Ramsar Site Managers (if they are not a priority target audience). The survey will consist of a short series of questions intended to gauge these individuals' awareness of, access to, and use of STRP materials, as well as their interest in the range of types of existing STRP products and could also be distributed online to reach additional target audiences. The survey will also seek to determine what type(s) of scientific and technical advice would be most helpful to the individual in implementing the Convention's objectives.

STRP Chair and Scientific and Technical Support Officer: will supplement the Consultant's survey by reaching the priority target audience through electronic means such as the STRP and other relevant web portal and webcasts. Participants will be asked the same questions as in the survey administered by the Consultant and the STRP Chair will compile results and provide to the Consultant. The STRP Chair will also conduct an initial literature survey, to be provided to the Consultant, which identifies examples of where scientific and technical guidance have been implemented, incorporated into law or policy, and or evaluated.

Timeframe: To be completed by August 2013.

Task 3. Review roles of relevant bodies within the convention for scientific support and delivery to stakeholders, including STRP, CEPA oversight, secretariat, national focal points, Ramsar Advisory Missions, Regional Initiatives.

Responsible individual(s): Consultant.

Method for accomplishing this task: The Consultant will undertake a literature survey of Ramsar guidance documents and other materials to identify the guidelines and descriptions of roles and responsibilities for the bodies listed above. The Consultant may also undertake, as needed and appropriate, short informational interviews with the STRP Chair, STRP Vice Chair, current and former STRP members, the CEPA Oversight Panel, Senior Regional Advisors, Deputy Secretary General, Scientific and Technical Support Officer, and the Regional Initiatives.

Timeframe: To be completed by September 2013.

Task 4. Review means that other MEAs' scientific bodies use to provide scientific and technical advice to those Conventions to support their implementation. Consider other bodies' best practices beyond the scientific and technical arena in addition to data collection.

Responsible individual(s): Consultant.

Method for accomplishing this task: The Consultant will conduct interviews with MEA staff in charge of the counterpart scientific bodies in the other biodiversity-related conventions, as well as other MEAs to identify the means used to provide scientific and technical advice to support implementation of the their Conventions, identifying practices that are relevant to Ramsar.

Timeframe: To be completed by September 2013.

Task 5. Review means that other (non-MEA) entities provide scientific and technical advice to their constituencies to support implementation of their activities.

Responsible individual(s): Consultant.

Method for accomplishing this task: The Consultant will conduct interviews with staff in charge of a select group of relevant IGOs, wetland organizations, advertising agencies, information clearinghouses, philanthropic organizations, and scientific societies (e.g., AAAS) as appropriate to identify the means that those entities use to provide scientific and technical advice to their constituencies to support implementation of their activities, identifying practices that are relevant to Ramsar.

Timeframe: To be completed by September 2013.

Phase Two

Task 1. Compile and synthesize information collected in the surveys of individuals and of literature, as well as information collected from MEAs.

Responsible individual(s): Consultant.

Method for accomplishment of task: The Consultant will compile and synthesize the results of the surveys of individuals and literature and MEAs, identifying common themes emerging as well as areas of common views and provide this information, and as appropriate options for the refinement of Convention processes, to the Review Committee.

Timeframe: To be completed by mid-November 2013.

Task 2. Consider information collected by Consultant. Share ideas and provide recommendations for: ways to address issues identified by the data, including inter alia adding/deleting scientific products from the current suite of scientific and technical products produced by STRP, CEPA, the regional initiatives and centers, and the Secretariat to effectively support Contracting Parties' ability to advance implementation of the Convention; possible refinements or changes to all relevant convention processes to facilitate effective communication.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by mid-December 2013.

Task 3. Compile and synthesize ideas collected from Review Committee Members on ideas collected in Task 2.

Responsible individual(s): Consultant.

Method for accomplishment of task: The Consultant will compile and synthesize the results of the surveys of individuals and literature, identifying common themes emerging as well as areas of common views and provide this information back to the Review Committee.

Timeframe: To be completed by February 2014.

Phase Three

Task 1. Consider Consultant's work and discuss preparations of a draft resolution to respond to the assignments in Resolution XI.16.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: In person meeting(s) on the margins of SC47.

Timeframe: During SC47 (early 2014)

Task 2. Provide recommendations for: improving the communication of needs from Contracting Parties for scientific and technical support to STRP for action, enhancing the operability of guidance for the target resources; development of clear and transparent criteria to formally

prioritize STRP work in order to ensure that the tasks undertaken by the STRP reflect the highest priority needs of the Contracting Parties; and better communication of needs from Contracting Parties for scientific and technical support to the STRP for action.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by June 2014.

Task 3. Provide recommendations for ways and means to strengthen collaboration with other MEAs' scientific bodies, as with NGOs, and other organizations including the private sector and other relevant international entities.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by June 2014.

Task 4. Identify monitoring and evaluation and testing mechanisms for future reviews to continue to ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by June 2014.

Task 5. Generate suggestions for future vision of activities and direction for the development of products and delivery of scientific and technical information to the Convention, including STRP organization, composition, and working practices, and possible refinements or changes to all relevant Convention processes.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by June 2014.

Task 6. Generate draft resolution text for consideration at SC48 that incorporates the outputs of Tasks 2 – 5.

Responsible individual(s): Review Committee Members.

Method for accomplishment of task: Electronically, by e-mail.

Timeframe: To be completed by August 2014.

Resources Required for this Work:

The Review Committee will be focused and use cost-effective means of working so as to keep its activity within reasonable limits and minimize costs.

Financial: The Chairs of the Standing Committee, Subgroup on Finance, Management Working Group, and the STRP plus the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee should review the STRP line items in the budget to direct their use as necessary toward implementing Resolution XI.16 in order to secure the funds indicated (initially 80,000 CHF for Consultant support) as well as any other expenses identified by the Review Committee.

Secretariat support: The Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisors will support the work of this Committee by engaging their region's National Focal Points and STRP Focal Points and helping to secure responses to requests for information, perspectives, case studies, and best practices as requested by the review committee. The Scientific and Technical Support Officer will also assist the STRP Chair in completion of the tasks to be undertaken by the STRP Chair.

Consultant support: The Secretariat is requested to contract a Consultant with familiarity with global exchange of scientific information, to include site-level-related issues, initially to undertake tasks two, three, four, and five in phase one and tasks one and three in phase two. It is noted that the Consultant may be called upon as needed by the Review Committee in order to provide additional support.

Method of Working:

No meetings of this Review Committee are envisioned outside those that may occur during the week of Standing Committee meetings; instead, communication is largely anticipated to be by e-mail, or by other electronic means.