

Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) note the STRP Chair's report; and
- b) consider possible ways of sourcing funding for implementation of the highest priority tasks as identified by Standing Committee 46 Decision 14 (SC46-14).

Introduction

1. This report from the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) covers STRP activities and progress since the Standing Committee last met at its 46th meeting (SC46).
2. Other papers for the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC47) that are relevant to the work of the STRP are DOC. SC47-16 (Report of the STRP Oversight Committee), which covers budget allocations, DOC. SC47-19 (Report on IPBES-2), DOC. SC47-08 (Draft Resolutions anticipated for COP12 consideration) and DOC. SC47-03 resulting from Resolution XI.16 on *Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention*.

Products

3. The new STRP Platform (<http://strp.ramsar.org>) was launched in July 2013. Designed to facilitate the Panel's intersessional work, it includes a 'closed' password-protected workspace and an 'open' portal to provide more information about STRP activities and products to a wider audience. All STRP NFPs are subscribed to the workspace and given a username and password, so that they can actively contribute to the tasks of the STRP. They have complete access to ongoing work through the different forums in the workspace, and are encouraged to provide input to discussions and draft documents.
4. The STRP initiated a series of webinars (online conferences) to raise awareness of the different activities being carried out by the Ramsar National Focal Points (Ramsar NFPs), STRP National Focal Points (STRP NFPs), the STRP itself and other Ramsar stakeholders to implement the Convention across the world. The webinars also seek to support interaction among STRP NFPs and Ramsar NFPs. Three webinars have been delivered, and more are planned.
 - The first, on 22 July 2013, was conducted in Spanish for Ramsar NFPs and STRP NFPs of the Neotropics region. Enrique Barraza, El Salvador's STRP and Ramsar NFP, presented the *Plan nacional para mejorar el manejo de sitios Ramsar en el Salvador (National Plan for the Improved management of Ramsar Sites in El Salvador)*. 14 people from 8 countries participated.

- The second webinar, *Towards the sustainable planning and management of urban wetlands*, was conducted on 13 September 2013 by Rob McInnes, Society of Wetland Scientists representative to the STRP. 36 people from 15 countries participated.
 - In the third webinar on 24 January 2014, Ramsar Convention Secretary General Christopher Briggs presented his vision for the Convention to a wider Ramsar constituency. 24 people from 11 countries participated.
5. The webinars are available on the 'open' area of the STRP web portal (<http://strp.ramsar.org/strp-publications/strp-webinars>).
 6. In December 2013, Briefing Note No. 6, *Towards the wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands*, was issued. Prepared by Rob McInnes, the Briefing Note expands on the principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands as articulated in Resolution XI.11. It is intended to help managers and planners of towns and cities ensure the wise use of wetlands.
 7. Three STRP Newsletters have been published, to keep STRP NFPs and the broader Ramsar community informed of the progress of the Panel's work and to disseminate other relevant wetlands news. The Newsletters are available on the 'open' area of the STRP web portal (<http://strp.ramsar.org/news-events/strp-newsletter>).
 8. A list of scientific and policy-related publications written by STRP members is at Annex I.

Meetings and workshops

9. In October 2013, the Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia delivered the week-long Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for Implementation of the Convention in Changwon, Republic of Korea. The workshop's objectives were to:
 - improve awareness of STRP and Ramsar Convention processes;
 - explain and clarify the role of STRP National Focal Points;
 - highlight the importance and role of the Changwon Declaration (Resolution X.3);
 - update Asian STRP National Focal Points on the work of the STRP over the coming triennium, especially its priority tasks; and
 - identify how to encourage good networking between STRP National Focal Points, the STRP and wetland experts in the region and contribute to the progress of the highest priority tasks of the STRP.

Approximately 60 wetland experts from over 20 countries in the region attended, including STRP members, STRP NFPs, Ramsar NFPs, STRP members and wetland experts. The Ramsar Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania and the Scientific and Technical Support Officer represented the Secretariat. The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Environment and Gyeongnam Province generously funded the workshop.
10. In October 2013, the STRP Chair, the Scientific and Technical Support Officer and former Assistant Advisor for Asia-Oceania visited the Sultanate of Oman to provide technical support on national implementation of the Convention. The visit had four objectives:
 - to provide advice on the drafting of a National Wetland Policy or Strategy;
 - to provide advice on the establishment of a National Wetland Committee;
 - to review existing environmental legislation to ensure it supports the Ramsar principles of wise use of wetlands; and
 - to provide technical advice regarding the development of a national wetland inventory in Oman.

11. The STRP also remains engaged in the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES):
 - STRP member Randy Thaman attended a meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, the scientific and technical body of IPBES, in Norway in June 2013.
 - STRP member Stanley Liphadzi attended an expert workshop on the IPBES Conceptual Framework in South Africa in August 2013, on behalf of the STRP Chair.
 - The second meeting of the Platform's Plenary (IPBES-2) was held in Antalya, Turkey, from 9 to 14 December 2013. The Ramsar Convention was represented by the Secretary General and the STRP Chair. STRP members Randy Thaman and Matt Walpole also participated as, respectively, a member of the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and a representative of UNEP-WCMC. The STRP Chair spoke on behalf of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) present at IPBES-2 (Ramsar, CBD, UNCCD, CMS, and CITES), noting that the MEAs look forward to both contributing to and benefiting from the adopted work programme. See DOC. SC47-19 for additional details.

11. In November 2013, STRP member Randy Milton attended a workshop on 'The governance mechanisms of the new standard to identify sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity (Key Biodiversity Areas)', held in Brasilia, Brazil. The STRP is providing comments on the relationship between Ramsar and KBA criteria.

12. The STRP Chair was an observer at the 6th Conference of the Parties of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which was held in June 2013 in the Galápagos, Ecuador. In developing its work programme for the next two years, the IAC COP agreed to consider how it might provide input to the *State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to people* (SoWWS) report, STRP Task No. 18, through its Scientific Committee or other appropriate means. The IAC work programme also included the task of identifying and, where appropriate, informing the relevant Contracting Party, the Ramsar Secretariat and the Ramsar STRP, when the ecological character of a Ramsar Site providing sea turtle habitat has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

13. The STRP Chair has been invited to visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to provide technical advice, and a visit has been planned. In the interim, STRP members provided input to the Secretariat on the UAE water strategy.

14. A list of meetings and workshops in which STRP members have participated is attached at Annex II.

Budgetary Matters

15. As noted in DOC. SC47-16, the STRP Oversight Committee approved allocations under the 2013 STRP budget line for advancing high-priority tasks approved by SC46.

16. Rather than convene a single, large-scale STRP mid-term workshop in Spring 2014, the STRP Chair decided in consultation with the Secretariat that, in light of limited funding, it would be more efficient to hold smaller workshops to make progress on high-priority tasks (such as the workshop on climate change issues to be held in China in April 2014, as discussed below at paragraph 22).

Progress on high-priority tasks

17. In light of the limited STRP budget, Standing Committee 46 Decision 14 (SC46-14) called on the STRP to focus on nine high-priority tasks. Below is a summary of progress to date on these, noting the amount allocated to each task so far.
18. *State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People (SoWWS)* report (CHF 20,000 allocation). An initial set of SoWWS factsheets are expected by mid-2014, which will provide input to the Convention's next Strategic Plan (2016-2021). The funds will be used to facilitate the compilation of factsheets by different indicator experts. A conference call with STRP members and representatives of contributing STRP observer organizations was held on 10 January 2014 to review the status of this task. UNEP-WCMC has made significant progress, through the work of intern Matthew Dixon, in the compilation of data for a proposed first tranche on wetland area trends.
19. *CEPA - capacity building needs of Contracting Parties* (CHF 15,000 allocation). The funding is intended for a scoping study with Ramsar Contracting Parties and others to identify the most suitable capacity-building approaches. Terms of reference for the study are being drafted. The Asia Regional Workshop in Korea delivered on Task 2a, 'Capacity building for STRP NFPs', which calls for at least one capacity-building workshop per triennium.
20. *Invasive species and wetlands* (CHF 10,000 allocation). The funding is intended to lead to a Briefing Note which will serve as a guide to guidance for wetland managers and policy-makers. Terms of reference are being produced for the lead author, which will be the IUCN Global Invasive Alien Species Coordinator, with input from the IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group.
21. *Ramsar Sites Information Service* (no allocation). STRP input has been completed. The new RSIS is expected to be available for initial testing by mid-2014. At the Asia Regional Workshop, one session was devoted to the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) 2012 revision, and comments on the revised form were passed to the Secretariat.
22. *Climate change advice* (CHF 3,850 allocation). The primary task requires a review of CBD and UNFCCC decisions and determination of their relevance for Ramsar. The funds will be used for a small workshop in China in April 2014, hosted by the Institute of Wetland Research, China Academy of Forestry, which is generously covering in-country costs.
23. *Strategy for engaging Ramsar in the global water debate* (CHF 20,000 allocation). Regional inputs were collected on this topic at the Asia Regional Workshop. Terms of reference are being prepared to engage a consultant to draft an issues and positions paper. The task group is working closely with IUCN's water programme on this task.
24. *Wetlands and poverty eradication – guidance and case studies* (CHF 30,000 allocation). The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) South East Asia has appointed Masters student James Lyon to a five-month internship at the IWMI office in Vientiane, Laos. Under the supervision of STRP member Sonali Senaratna, he will contribute to the work of the STRP on poverty eradication. They have identified potential case studies through requests on the Ramsar Forum and STRP web portal and at the Asia Regional Workshop, and through independent research. Planning is underway to engage a consultant and hold a consultative workshop in late May or early June to identify the strategic steps required to mainstream the

'Integrated framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication' into international and national policies and programmes for poverty eradication.

25. *Economics of benefits/services* (no allocation). Input was collected at the Asia Regional Workshop on the knowledge and methodology required to integrate ecosystem service values into planning and decision-making. Based on this feedback the group is currently developing an electronic version of a user needs questionnaire, to be circulated between March and June. The responses will be collated and a full report made available by September 2014. As part of the user needs questionnaire, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust is helping to review COP11 National Reports to collate information on ecosystem services to help inform future guidance.
26. *Advice on streamlining Article 3.2 and Montreux Record procedures* (CHF 20,000 allocation). The STRP is collaborating with WWF Wetland Conservation Manager Denis Landenbergue to assess the possibility with WWF of reassessing and promoting Ramsar Advisory Missions as tools to be implemented more often, whether or not the Ramsar Sites concerned are on the Montreux Record. WWF may engage a consultant, and the STRP is considering how its research can help inform various aspects of this task, especially in streamlining procedures for reporting changes in ecological character under Article 3.2 of the Convention.
27. The STRP plans to hold its 18th meeting (STRP18) during the second week of September 2014 in Gland, as its final physical meeting before COP12.

Annex I

List of scientific and policy-related publications by STRP members and invited experts

Cui, L. *Getting to Know Wetlands*. (2013). China: Higher Education Press.

Finlayson, C. M., Bartlett, M., Davidson, N. & McInnes, R. (2013). The Ramsar Convention and Urban Wetlands: an Opportunity for Wetland Education and Training. In Paul, S. (ed.). *WET eBook: Workbook for Managing Urban Wetlands in Australia*. 34-51 pp. New South Wales, Australia: Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

Finlayson, C. M. (2013). Climate Change and the Wise Use of Wetlands: Information from Australian Wetlands. *Hydrobiologia*, 708:1, 145-152.

Finlayson, C.M., Davis, J.A., Gell, P.A., Kingsford, R.T. & Parton, K.A. (2013). The Status of Wetlands and the Predicted Effects of Global Climate Change: The Situation in Australia. *Aquatic Sciences* 75, 73–93.

Gardner, R. C. (2013). Mitigation Banking and Reputational Risk. *National Wetlands Newsletter*, 36:4, 10-11.

Gardner, R. C. and Fox, J. (2013). The Legal Status of Environmental Credit Stacking. *Ecology Law Quarterly*, 40:4, 713-758.

Lloyd, C.R., Rebelo, L-M., Finlayson, C.M. (2013). Providing Low-Budget Estimations of Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Agricultural Wetlands. *Environmental Research Letters*, 8:1, 1-13.

McCartney, M., Rebelo, L-M., Xenarios, S. & Smakhtin, V. (2013). *Agricultural Water Storage in an Era of Climate Change: Assessing Need and Effectiveness in Africa*. 37 pp. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

McInnes, R. (2013). *Towards the Wise Use of Urban and Peri-urban Wetlands*. Ramsar Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes Series. No. 6. Gland, Switzerland: Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

McInnes, R. J. (2013). Recognising Wetland Ecosystem Services within Urban Case Studies. *Marine and Freshwater Research*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1071/MF13006>.

McInnes, R. J. (2013). Recognizing Ecosystem Services from Wetlands of International Importance: An Example from Sussex, UK. *Wet-lands*. DOI 10.1007/s13157-013-0458-1.

Mills, K., Gell, P., Gergis, J., Baker, P.J., Finlayson, C.M. et al. (2013). Paleoclimate Studies and Natural-Resource Management in the Murray-Darling Basin II: Unravelling Human Impacts and Climate Variability. *Australian Journal of Earth Sciences*, 60:5, 561-571.

Musgrove, A.J., Aebischer, N.J., Eaton, M.A., Hearn, R.D., Newson, S.E., Noble, D.G., Parsons, M., Risely, K. & Stroud, D.A. (2013). Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 106: 64-100.

Pittock, J., Finlayson, C.M. & Howitt, J. (2013). Beguiling and Risky: 'Environmental Works and Measures' for Wetland Conservation under a Changing Climate. *Hydrobiologia*, 708: 1, 111-13.1.

Russi D., ten Brink P., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013). *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands*. London and Brussels: IEEP; Gland: Ramsar Secretariat.

Wood, A, Dixon, A., & McCartney, M. (eds.) (2013). *Wetland Management and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa*. Oxon, U.K.: Routledge.

Annex II

List of meetings/workshops attended by STRP members, invited experts and observer representatives

2014

Fifth Meeting of the Inter-agency Liaison Group on Invasive Alien Species, IUCN and CABI, 13-15 January 2014, Nairobi, Kenya.

2013

Meeting on the Post-2015 Development Agenda Consultation on Water: Water Resources Management and Wastewater Management & Water Quality, UNECE, 27-28 February 2013, Geneva, Switzerland.

Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) Criteria and Delineation Workshop, IUCN, WCPA and SSC, 11-15 March 2013, Front Royal, Virginia, U.S.A.

Third Meeting of the Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs of the Americas, 22-27 April 2013, Montelimar, Nicaragua.

Workshop on Adaptation Policy for the Conservation and Management of Nationally and Internationally Important Wetlands, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, (NCCARF) the Society for Wetland Scientists (Oceania chapter) and ILWS, 17-18 April 2013, Melbourne, Australia.

Society of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting, 2-5 June, Duluth, Minnesota, U.S.A.

Wetlands and Urbanisation Project in West Africa: Local Stakeholders' Workshop, Ramsar Secretariat and UN-Habitat, 17-25 June 2013, City of Aneho, Togo; Ga South Municipality, Ghana; Somone Municipality, Senegal.

Global Wetland Observing System (GWOS) Workshop, Wetlands International, 19 June 2013, Frascati, Italy.

BirdLife International World Congress-Partnerships for Nature and People, 19-22 June 2013, Ottawa, Canada.

Sixth Conference of the Parties of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, 26-28 June, Galapagos, Ecuador.

Workshop on Globwetland II presentation and Globwetland III users' consultation, ESA and Ramsar Secretariat, 15-19 July 2013, Rome, Italy.

Expert Workshop on the Conceptual Framework for IPBES, 25-26 August 2013, Cape Town, South Africa.

World Water Week 2013, Stockholm International Water Institute, 1-6 September 2013, Stockholm, Sweden.

NorBalWet Conference on Nordic Wetlands in a Time of Climate Change: Mitigation, Resilience and Adaptation, 3-5 September 2013, Ilulissat, Greenland.

Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for Implementation of the Ramsar Convention, Ramsar Convention Secretariat and Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia, 7-11 October 2013, Changwon City, Republic of Korea.

Seventeenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 14-18 October 2013, Montreal, Canada.

Africa Climate Conference (ACC2013), 15-18 October 2013, Arusha, Tanzania.

Global Wetlands Observing System (GWOS) Workshop, 4-5 November 2013, Ede, Netherlands.
PAGES Expert Workshop on Ecosystem Character Baselines and Historical Records, 5-8 November 2013, Queenscliff, Australia.

Workshop on Governance of Sites of Significance for Biodiversity, IUCN, WCPA and SSC, 6-9 November 2013, Brasilia Brazil.

Third Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, 25-27 November 2013, Oslo, Norway.

BIP Partnership Technical Meeting, 2-4 December 2013, Cambridge, U.K.

TEEB Webinars – Transforming our Approach to Water and Wetlands, 12 December 2013.

Second Session of the IPBES Plenary (IPBES-2), 9-14 December 2013, Antalya, Turkey.