

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
13th Meeting of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel
Gland, Switzerland, 30 May - 2 June 2006**

Report of the meeting

30 May 2006

Agenda item 1: Opening remarks

1. **Paul Mafabi, Chair of the Standing Committee (SC)**, welcomed the participants on behalf of the SC and said that he and John Bowleg, the Vice Chair, would be participating all week to listen and hopefully to offer advice. He noted that the Convention has always been at the forefront with its scientific and technical foundations and that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), with the wealth of guidelines and review it has provided for the Parties, has been the key to that success. He invited the participants to focus on the tasks that the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) has identified as immediate and high priorities before considering lower priority items on the shopping list. He asked them to ensure that the style and form of the products would be “fit for purpose” and stressed the cross-cutting importance of communications, education, and public awareness (CEPA) issues. He noted the STRP’s heavy workload but pointed out that the COP has approved some funding for this triennium. He expressed his satisfaction at seeing representatives from so many MEA secretariats and other organizations.
2. **Peter Bridgewater, the Secretary General (SG)**, welcomed the participants and noted that, because good policy must be informed by good science, the STRP is at the core of the Convention’s processes. The number of Parties to the Convention is growing fast and, as most are at the developing stage, there is an increasing need for sound advice. He noted that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) painted a gloomy picture of wetlands declining at a faster rate than other ecosystems and said that it is important to consider practicalities for implementation, including rehabilitation and restoration. He stressed the continuing importance of groundwater issues, as half the world now depends primarily upon that source of water and it is being used faster than it can be replenished. He said that much of the public thinks of wetlands as isolated spots and needs to be brought to see the broader interconnections, and he emphasized the key role of CEPA in getting that message out more effectively. The message must be made intelligible to the wider community. He observed that, when it comes to promoting an integrated approach to managing terrestrial and coastal ecosystems, the Ramsar Convention, with its “mountains to the seas” coverage, is uniquely placed among the MEAs.
3. **Heather MacKay, Chair of the STRP**, welcomed the strong group of appointed members and members from the five International Organization Partners (IOPs), as well as the representatives of many MEA secretariats and other organizations. She recalled that STRP meetings are scientific meetings, not political processes, and that all insights and inputs are welcomed.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

4. Several minor adjustments were suggested to the draft agenda, and it was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

5. **The Chair** welcomed the two invited experts, Eleni Fitoka and George P. Lukacs, and all observer organizations were admitted by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Introductions of members and observers

6. At the Chair's invitation, each of the participants – the regional, thematic, and IOP STRP members and the representatives of observer MEAs and organizations – introduced him- or herself, noting institutional affiliation and principal areas of interest.

Agenda item 5: Induction and briefing on the Convention

7. **Nick Davidson, the Deputy Secretary General (DSG)**, provided a PowerPoint introduction to the Convention, its structures and processes, and the role of the STRP among these. He outlined the STRP tasks to be considered and the Working Papers that have been provided.
8. **Sebastià Semene** provided a demonstration of the STRP Support Service, which was developed in the last triennium by Wetlands International to provide Web-based interactive communications on the development of STRP work and is still hosted on a WI Web site, but which is presently being maintained by the Secretariat. He invited participants to see him to be signed up for the appropriate Working Group fora and resolve any problems they might have. **The SG** expressed appreciation to WI for having developed the Service, which has been an extremely effective aid to the work of the STRP, but lamented that some past STRP members never used it. He urged everyone to become fully involved and use the Service regularly. **The Chair** noted that the Support Service fora make an important permanent record of the development of STRP thinking on various issues.
9. **Beatriz Torres (Global Biodiversity Information Facility, GBIF)** noted the importance of allowing participants to use their own native languages and drew attention to the possible usefulness of the European Commission's work on machine translation. **The DSG** noted that in general the language issue is driven by the costs of translation and interpretation and by the nature of the give and take of the work. He thanked everyone for making the effort to speak in English. He urged everyone to contribute to the Support Service fora, including their developing half-thoughts, and reminded that the Service is a closed site, available only to others in the fora and not to the public. He also explained that, with the approval of the Chair, others can be added to the fora, including STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) and any of the participants' colleagues who may wish to be involved – he urged everyone to give additional names and e-mail addresses to Sebastià Semene, specifying the appropriate areas of work.

Agenda item 6: STRP National Focal Points networking

10. **The Chair** noted the importance of mobilizing the regional networks and the Parties' disappointment about the lack of progress in the last triennium.
11. **Rebecca D'Cruz, the Vice-Chair**, drew attention to the Terms of Reference for the NFPs found in Working Paper 11, which were developed by STRP8 in 1999.
12. **The DSG** clarified that it is the STRP NFPs that are under discussion – Ramsar also has government and non-government NFPs for CEPA as well as “daily contacts” from the Administrative Authorities (AAs), who are sometimes referred to as NFPs, too. Not all Parties have named their STRP NFPs.
13. **Paul Mafabi** stressed the desirability of national networks – or “mini-STRPs” – within each Party and of linkages between the NFPs and the National Ramsar or National Wetland Committees (NRCs). **The Vice-Chair** noted that there is a lack of clarity about Ramsar links within each Party that is not articulated in the NFP TOR, and she suggested that the TOR should spell out how we envisage the process working.

14. **Doug Taylor, Wetlands International**, distinguished between some NFPs, for example in Europe, who make contacts and set up meetings and others, for example in Africa, who are unaware of their ability to link up with others to develop capacity within their countries. No real effort has yet been made to develop a capacity building orientation for the NFPs on how to call in support when needed. **The Vice-Chair** added the need for capacity building at regional level as well.
15. **Margarita Astrálaga, Senior Advisor for the Americas**, explained that in the Neotropics the designated STRP NFP is frequently a high level official who is too busy, and she noted a need to get across the message that the NFP needs to be the right person, ready to work. She suggested that the STRP regional members could take the lead in delivering that message. **Philippe Gerbeaux** agreed that the regional members should mentor the NFPs in their regions, taking advantage of scientific workshops in the region to raise STRP issues. He suggested that the Support Service fora are too restricted and that the material posted there is too difficult to distribute onward in-country or in the region. **The DSG** noted that it is envisaged that the Support Service will offer national fora or e-mail lists to assist in developing national networks through the NFPs. He urged that the regional STRP members should consult with the NFPs to explore where we are, and to make use of the NRCs where they exist – he suggested that members review the list of NFPs and identify who are the right and wrong people for the function, in light of expectations about what characteristics the NFPs should possess in those countries. The DSG noted, though, that a level of frustration is to be expected among the NFPs, as they have largely been ignored for the past six years.
16. **Lucia Scodanibbio, Assistant Advisor for Africa**, reported that many Ramsar-related officials in Africa do not know what their roles are and what they should be doing. She noted that Abou Bamba, the Senior Advisor, foresees using Swiss Grant for Africa funds to develop a manual for the Administrative Authorities in Africa, towards the end of this year, and suggested that an orientation for the STRP NFPs could be included in that, thus linking capacity building for the STRP NFP with that for the AAs.
17. **Teresita Borges** suggested that, to combat the notion that the NFP should be a high-level dignitary, we could promote the idea that the NFP should be a concept rather than just a name, and that a group or institution could fulfill the needs as well as a person. In Cuba, for example, Ramsar issues are frequently handled by a number of different groups, and all of them could be part of the NFP. **Karén Jenderedjian** suggested that, since STRP NFPs are appointed by the AAs, the Secretariat should provide the AAs with more information about what is really needed. **Archana Chatterjee (WWF)** pointed out that in some countries the NFPs have to get clearance from the foreign affairs office to make public comments about the Convention.
18. **Philippe Gerbeaux** suggested that the NFP TOR should be produced in a simpler, more attractive presentation, highlighting the key points. **Dave Pritchard (BirdLife International)** suggested that the chief limiting factors on the NFPs are timidity and lack of familiarity with the process. He said that frequency of contacts and the visibility of NFP interactions should help. He suggested that NFPs should be able to exchange experience laterally as well as vertically, back and forth with the STRP. Dave Pritchard noted that the NFP TOR are very general and should better highlight what they can help with – the NFPs can be an important test bed for the STRP's work, particularly with the near-final versions of the documents, as we don't presently have a trial stage in the Panel's products (e.g., how well the guidance in English would translate into other languages).
19. **Tunde Ojei (Wetlands International)** pointed out that the Support Service does include regionally targeted platforms to help cater for each region's own needs from the NFPs.

20. **María Rivera** reiterated the need for National Ramsar or Wetland Committee (NRC) involvement with the NFPs, though the best mechanism would depend upon the country and region, and she noted the potential role of the CREHO regional centre in assisting the NFPs.
21. **Jo Mulongoy (CBD Secretariat)** reported that the CBD has the same problems with the NFPs of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), and that new TOR have been developed, stressing the need for commitment. The CBD is beginning to get real scientific expertise, sometimes by institutions rather than individuals. An effort is being made, associated with some meetings, to provide some training for NFPs, and the Parties are being encouraged to develop their infrastructure capacities through the CBD's Clearing-House Mechanism and by working with their GEF coordinator. He said that CBD does not have an interactive forum as advanced as the STRP Support Service but hopes to be moving in that direction.
22. **Bruce Gray (Global Water Partnership (GWP))** noted that Australia is grappling with this complex issue – the STRP NFPs are an important part of the Convention's work, but there is no single answer for all countries and regions. He observed that we debate what we expect from the NFPs but have not considered what the NFPs should expect from Ramsar – what value would the NFP see in committing spare time to the role, what incentives are there? He suggested that the Contracting Parties should be brought to consider their engagement with the STRP NFP process as one of their obligations under the Convention.
23. **Max Finlayson** remarked that members and NFPs should not be expected to contribute their spare time; their STRP commitments have to be incorporated into their job responsibilities. He noted that STRP members are meant to be independent experts who are not representing their governments, but NFPs are normally appointed from within the AAs. He suggested that it might be more valuable if we asked for NFPs to be chosen from outside the AA, on the basis of expertise and ability to contribute, but in that case we should not expect ever to have one from every Party. He noted that if we really were to have NFPs from 150 Parties providing input, it would be too much to assimilate anyway.
24. **Heather MacKay** said that the AA in South Africa had been under the impression that the NFP had to come from within the government, and that after discussions they now begin to see a way to bring expertise in from outside government, both to the STRP and to the AA as well. **Eleni Fitoka (EKBY)** reported that the MedWet Inventory Working Group has had a difficult time identifying the right persons or organizations to benefit from training.
25. **Paul Mafabi** agreed that the NFP need not come from the AA and suggested the possibility of Parties designating an alternate NFP, in order to open up the process. **Heather MacKay** reported that South Africa was presently considering appointing a team comprising a younger person to do the bulk of the work and build his or her capacity, with a more experienced person to provide advice and oversight.
26. **Sandra Hails, CEPA Programme Officer**, agreed that we need to be realistic in expectations, noting that many Parties are reluctant to name their CEPA NFPs from outside the AAs; they rarely have CEPA experts on-board within the AA but are reluctant to relinquish control by nominating someone from the outside. It will always be true that some Parties will insist upon designating some overloaded person on the staff. She said that the CEPA Oversight Panel is going over the CEPA NFP TOR carefully to urge Parties to think outside the AA. She noted that the Support Service regional fora will be a powerful instrument if the regional people here use it to encourage the NFPs, chiefly by sitting in the middle between the STRP and the NFPs, summarizing and simplifying a little and reducing the volume of material – she urged that the regional members should use the regional fora to reach out and focus the contacts with the NFPs.

27. **Margarita Astrálaga** noted that the attributes for STRP members in the STRP modus operandi (Resolution IX.11) would be appropriate for the NFPs as well. She suggested that it should be possible for the regional members to select a person or organization to serve as a contact for networking within the regions – identifying three or four regional wetland centres would be more valuable than relying only upon nominal appointees from the AAs. **Beatriz Torres (GBIF)** agreed that it is a perennial problem to find the “right person” and suggested that the NFP nomination TOR should spell out that “this is a working position”, not just an honorary one, and that nominees should set aside one day a month for it. **Rebecca Tharme (IWMI)** suggested that the relationships among the three kinds of Ramsar NFPs (AAs, CEPA, and STRP) should be spelt out more clearly.
28. **Ndegwa Ndiang’ui (UNCCD Secretariat)** described the UNCCD’s experience in getting Parties to appoint a “science correspondent” under each of the Convention’s NFPs to work with the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The response has been rather slow, and there has been a reluctance in some Parties; he noted that the intricacies at country level can be difficult to get round, and the Secretariat often needs to intervene within the Parties. He noted that some Parties are sending representatives who are not scientists, which can have the effect of setting up a parallel decision-making process. **Rebecca D’Cruz** agreed that in the Asia region there can be a worry, when appointing an STRP NFP, about establishing a line of communication outside the main agency.
29. **Tom de Meulenaer (CITES Secretariat)** noted that, though science is brought into the Conventions differently, CITES experiences similar problems. Parties are legally required to appoint both a contact body and a science body. The Secretariat tries to provide support for some countries, where possible, and there have been capacity building workshops; there is an interactive communications mechanism, though it is not yet as sophisticated as the STRP Support Service fora. He felt that the idea of a brief manual for NFPs is a good one.
30. **Karén Jenderedjian** urged that the importance of working in English should be stressed in the TOR for NFPs. **Philippe Gerbeaux** pointed to a need for regular coordination between the STRP regional members and the Senior Regional Advisors (SRAs) in the Secretariat. He identified key points (2, 6, 7, 8, and 9) in the NFP TOR and said that these are the ones being given priority in Oceania. **Maria Rivera** suggested that the attributes of STRP members listed in the STRP modus operandi should be included in the NFP TOR and agreed that it might be desirable to try to bring a larger group of people to the NFPs, perhaps by selecting a person from each country for each Working Group.
31. **The Vice-Chair, Rebecca D’Cruz**, noted that in the list of NFPs in Asia quite a few come from within the AAs and recalled the issue of AAs feeling a need for control. She urged further thought on the idea of the STRP working more with institutions, even if they are not the formal NFPs. **Teresita Borges** suggested that the TOR should emphasize the need for the person/institution to have the capacity to establish synergies at national level. **Max Finlayson** noted that good ideas had been proposed but dissuaded from devoting too much time to the issue of NFPs; he felt that the NFP process has not worked so far, and the COP may have to rethink the approach.
32. **Christine Prietto** observed that the Support Service is a great service but cannot replace the value of personal interactions. She felt that institutions probably work better as NFPs than individuals, since they can bounce ideas around, and urged that we should encourage people-to-people contacts. **Robert McInnes (Society of Wetland Scientists)** reported that SWS Europe is trying to get people to talk to one another and share knowledge, but in some cases institutions that may be in competition for grants are reluctant to engage fully; it is important to find the right institutions. **Doug Taylor (Wetlands International)** raised the value of “mentoring,” whereby experienced individuals can work directly with NFPs to help them join the process.

33. **Dave Pritchard** expressed sympathy with Max Finlayson's pessimism but noted that the concept of STRP NFPs has heavy political resonance within the COP. He cautioned that identifying institutions as NFPs might bring a loss of focus, of accountability, in the response. He noted that the issue of addressing incentives for NFPs might be a two-edged sword and might, without the right incentives, make matters worse.
34. **Tom de Meulenaer** reported that by October the CITES Secretariat will produce a comparative study of how the different conventions deal with science (though not at the level of NFPs).
35. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui** emphasized the importance of the NFPs of each convention developing synergies and communication with the NFPs of the other conventions in each country, through workshops, etc. He said that the only country in which that is working well is Uganda. **Paul Mafabi** reported that in Uganda's experience the key is personal contacts, and he urged the STRP regional members and the Secretariat's SRAs to spend time calling people in the Parties and developing contacts. **Viorel Blujdea, Chair of the UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology (CST)**, reported on Romania's experience with bringing committees together.
36. **The SG** applauded the very useful discussion and recalled that at Ramsar COP9 there was a great deal of enthusiasm for energizing the NFP network. He noted that we have always thought in terms of individuals as NFPs but that the idea of a "tag team" or institution is worth considering. He noted the need to take cultural differences into account when considering whether the NFP should be internal or external to the AA ministry, for there is no one solution. The aim of the NFP process is not a list of names but rather a two-way interpretation mechanism. The NFPs could be particularly helpful in assessing the suitability of the language used in the STRP's documents.
37. **The Chair and Vice-Chair** noted that there is more energy now to try to engage the NFPs, but that we should have realistic expectations. They felt that we do not need to have active NFPs in all Parties and need not strive for that, but rather that there is enough interest out there that we should be able to get additional feedback and input from the Parties on the Panel's work.
38. **The Chair** said that it was instructive to hear the different challenges experienced by the other conventions. She urged that a contact group meet in a break-out session to study these ideas further and report back, and she offered to write up a list of bullet points from the present discussion to assist in that. **The DSG** suggested that the break-out group on regional networking could review the TOR and discuss linkages among the different NFP processes, how to work with the NFPs to identify experts in thematic areas, the issue of NFP independence within the formal AA mechanism, and the question of NFPs as individuals and/or institutions such as wetland research centres.

Agenda item 7: Thematic work areas.

Agenda item 7.7: Resolution VIII.45 and ongoing functions of the STRP

39. **The Chair, Heather MacKay**, addressed **task 2** in the Draft STRP Work Plan 2006-2008 and explained the evolution of the increased emphasis on the "review" function of the STRP. She drew attention to the value of "blue sky thinking" about emerging issues 20 or 30 years in the future, which sometimes is done more fruitfully in informal gatherings than in formal sessions of the Panel. **The SG** said that it would be good not to miss this opportunity, and **the DSG** pointed to various times during the week when informal discussions might be held. **Jo Mulongoy** described the CBD's efforts to encourage thinking about emerging issues among chairs of the SBSTTA.
40. **The Chair** turned to **task 3** on maintaining an overview of progress in the implementation of the COP Resolutions, noting that the work on effectiveness indicators is ongoing. She saw a need to look at how effective our guidance has been and whether it could be made better, especially by

greater attention to the target audiences. She noted that not all Parties implement all the Resolutions. She proposed a process involving 1) a desk-based study of the information to be found in the National Reports by the Parties, to give a basis to work from, followed by 2) a survey questionnaire and/or interviews to get input from the Parties, and then by 3) a descriptive product and 4) a report to the STRP and possibly a report to Ramsar COP10 as well. A consultant would be needed to design the questionnaire. Part of the purpose would be to learn, where the guidance is not useful, why it is not.

41. **Maria Rivera** noted that the USA, as chair of the SC's Subgroup on Resolution VIII.45, has executed a questionnaire that could be useful. **The DSG** replied that the response to that was disappointing and that the USA felt it was inadequate for analysis. He noted that the USA has expressed a willingness to follow up with a questionnaire to a more limited number of sites, and he recalled the range of potential targets, such as wetland managers, policy-makers, etc. He raised the issue that if implementation of the guidance is found to be inadequate, we need to learn whether the problem is with the guidance or with the mechanisms for getting it into the right hands. We would also need to ask whether the Parties are calling for guidance on the right things.
42. **Paul Mafabi** recalled that the SC, as well as recognizing the STRP's role in progressing this work (Decision SC34-4), is proposing to pursue this question with selected pilot countries, and he suggested that regional centres such as CREHO and Ramsar Iran and others might play a role. **The DSG** stressed that there is a need to ensure that all such work is well-coordinated in order to avoid confusing and multiple requests to Parties. **Jo Mulongoy** cautioned that distributing a questionnaire poses an additional task of reporting on the Parties; he noted that the respondents are unlikely to be able to report fully on everything that is going on, but if the purpose is merely to get examples of progress it might be more feasible.
43. **Mike Acreman** felt that questionnaires can be blunt instruments and that we may need assistance from beyond Ramsar. The questions should be better targeted rather than broad, and perhaps directed not just to the AAs. It would be helpful to go back to the Parties that raised the Resolutions in the first place. **The Chair** agreed with the need to stratify the types of guidance products and ask different questions about them. **The DSG** noted that some Ramsar guidance was intended to help our AAs to engage other sectors, which may not be happening; thus it would be useful to ask those other sectors, too. He stressed that we need to look at each part of the guidance to determine for whom and for what it was intended, and it might be that direct telephone calls would be a better mechanism. **Mike Acreman** suggested that we try to learn what have been the obstacles to achieving the purpose of the guidance, in order to establish the steps in the chain to useful guidance. **Bruce Gray** suggested that the task as proposed is too broad and some key aspects of the guidance should be selected for investigation.
44. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui** reported that the UNCCD has been grappling with how to get the Parties to respond to questionnaires on time, with no significant success. He noted the need for close targeting, so that the questioning should not be too broad, and he suggested picking key areas out of the National Reports and going back to the people who compiled the NRs, as a follow-up challenge.
45. **Dave Pritchard** cautioned that when designing a questionnaire to test an hypothesis it is necessary to determine what proposition is being tested. Is it just whether or not the guidance is being used? Suggestions for improving the guidance could be independent of the proposition. **Mark Spalding (The Nature Conservancy)** noted that the task talks about "maintaining" an overview of implementation, and yet the discussion seems to be focusing on a one-off snapshot. **The SG** recalled that the task was put forward without much thought, with more of a feeling, but he believed that if some Parties feel that some of the Convention's work is not being used as intended, it is important to address that issue, even if it is only a perceptual one. He felt that we do need to know whether the STRP products are valuable to their intended users, but it is not evident how

- best to discover that, and he urged the STRP to reflect further upon it. The questions should be how much the guidance is used, but more importantly, how can it be improved? The SG urged a less hurried and more thoughtful consideration, not driven by deadlines, and not just another questionnaire.
46. **The Chair** noted that the idea of a questionnaire is not locked in, and she urged that the dialogue continue on the Support Service fora. The idea of beginning with a desk-study of the NRs should be kept in mind.
 47. **The Chair** turned to **task 5** concerning the review of the Ramsar guidance, identification of possible gaps, and possible repackaging of older guidance into updated documents. She noted that this is based on the premise that the guidance is being used, and that should be tested first, perhaps by a limited, open-ended interview process which could lead to ideas about the best style and shape of guidance to move towards.
 48. **The DSG** reported that the third edition of the Ramsar Toolkit, the Handbooks, is presently being prepared following COP9, and that the elements are being reorganized and titled under broad rubrics in a new sequence. **Sandra Hails** noted that the CEPA Oversight Panel had suggested some changes in the publication plan and promised to circulate the present list of planned volumes.
 49. It was agreed that the way forward on reviewing and possibly repackaging guidance would be considered further using the Support Service fora, with a number of participants volunteering to participate in that.
 50. Concerning **task 161** on an overall strategy and framework for dealing with sector-based guidance and issues, **the Chair** noted the way in which wetlands and agriculture has evolved from a cross-cutting issue into a key work area, and she drew attention to the method employed by Nick Davidson in Working Paper 6 in laying out the background and a suggested way forward concerning the sector-based issue of wetlands and human health. She suggested that in future, when emerging issues are identified as likely to become prominent, someone should be tasked to do some homework on the issue and write it up and bring it forward with suggestions for development.

Decision STRP13-1: The STRP agreed that the process used in preparing background and bringing forward the emerging issue of wetlands and human health should serve as a model for dealing with additional emerging issues as they may arise.

Agenda item 7.1: Wise use and ecological character of wetlands

51. **Randy Milton**, Working Group 2 lead, noted that the Working Group membership is not yet fully formed and introduced **task 2** concerning a review of the case studies in *Towards the Wise Use of Wetlands* (Ramsar, 1993) and other relevant case studies, including advice on the application of **ecosystem approaches**, which he said should be in plural. The review of the *TWUW* case studies provides an opportunity to go back 17 years later and perhaps to see whether the guidance has been helpful. He noted a number of questions to be resolved, including the intended target audience of the review (the public, wetlands managers, decision-makers, etc.) and lessons learnt. He indicated that a draft TOR would be needed for a consultant to carry out the review and noted links to other STRP tasks involving case studies, and he suggested that a case study on the 20 years of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan could usefully be included. He proposed that the results would be published as a Ramsar Technical Report (RTR).
52. **Royal Gardner** volunteered to follow up on the two North American *TWUW* case studies and on the NAWMP. **The DSG** noted that the CBD and UNCCD are working on getting case studies,

especially involving the ecosystem approach, and suggested that their Secretariats be approached for help in identifying these. **Mike Acreman** noted that WG4 on water resources management will be discussing case studies on some of the same subjects and, given that complementarity, suggested agreeing a common TOR for both tasks. **Heather MacKay** noted the need for case studies on river basin management as well and urged that the WG leads collaborate, though she felt that it would probably not be possible to develop a common case study structure for multiple uses. **Dave Pritchard** suggested that it would be good to link the case studies closely to the use of the Ramsar guidance, as that would help to broaden the limited cases by reference to the generic guidance. He wondered which parts of the case studies would be useful: aside from the lessons learnt, it is unclear how to use the story of how the lessons came to be learned. **Bruce Gray** reported that the Global Water Partnership has a toolbox of IWRM case studies on water issues. He suggested that we do not embark upon getting case studies unless we know what we want out of them; it's not yet clear from the discussion what these case studies are intended for.

53. **Randy Milton** recalled that the COP's request was to review the cases studies in *TWUW* but he did not think that all of them are necessarily helpful. **Max Finlayson** noted that the purpose of this task was to examine the case studies we already have and to go back and see how our work has been used. **Jo Mulongoy (CBD)** said that the CBD uses case studies to develop principles and then operational guidelines, to try to use the case studies and principles to work with solving problems in the field.
54. **Robert McInnes (SWS)** asked whether bad or negative case studies should be included. **Bruce Gray** felt that case studies can be a valuable tool in experiential learning but it is essential to take care in crafting what is wanted from them. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui** reported that the UNCCD finds "best practice" case studies to be the most helpful and offered to see whether CCD has any on hand that might be useful. **Lucilla Spini (FAO)** said that the FAO is very interested in this work and has some material that could be useful; she offered to help locate the people within FAO to contact. **Tom de Meulenaer** remarked that CITES might have some relevant case studies as well. **Randy Milton** suggested that the Support Service forum be used to identify and contribute useful case studies. **Heather MacKay** observed that there seem to be a lot of case studies, both proposed and already available, all with slightly different purposes. She noted a value in looking closely at a few rather than broadly at many, and suggested that the process should be rationalized as the first priority.
55. **The DSG** noted that the *TWUW* book was significant in its time and now has the value of going back in time. He suggested that the Wise Use Working Group should take the coordinating lead on the case studies on wise use, and all others to collaborate with that lead. He felt that "bad practice" can be a valuable part of lessons learnt. He noted that the MA Conceptual Framework will help to provide a focus for the case studies, and that we need to keep that Framework in mind so that the toolkit of case studies will cover all of its elements. He added that with so many players there is a definite need for some additional consultancy support to coordinate them all. **Mike Acreman** agreed that each group can input its needs regarding case studies but that someone is needed to coordinate them. **Doug Taylor** noted that there is a "living chain" of people for some of the *TWUW* case studies, and they should be sought out wherever possible.

Decision STRP13-2: The STRP agreed on the need for a coordinated approach to gathering case studies for the different tasks and requested Randy Milton to keep a master list with input from all groups seeking case studies, outlining their specific needs and geographical areas.

56. **Randy Milton** turned to **task 15** concerning harmonization of definitions and terms related to ecosystem services/benefits and suggested using the Support Service fora to identify what terminologies the other MEAs are using. **The DSG** recalled the COP debate on those terms and said that what is needed is to keep an eye on the extent to which people are moving towards using

the MA terminology and report on that to COP10. He urged that the practice of the MEAs as well as other UN organizations and national development agencies be monitored and suggested that the regional STRP members should investigate whether MA terms are being used within national governments. **Ndegwa Ndiang’ui** reported that at the UNCCD COP in Nairobi some Parties were uncomfortable with “ecosystem services”, but **Jo Mulongoy** noted that the CBD has not had those problems. **The DSG** suggested that if an organization or body does not pick up the term, we should try to find out why.

57. Concerning **task 13** on utilizing the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, **the DSG** suggested that we look at the MA Conceptual Framework as a way of identifying important issues that we do not have guidance for. **Teresita Borges** noted that most people do not know about the MA, and **the DSG** expressed disappointment at the MA’s lack of success in communicating its products, especially in time for Ramsar processes, notably prior to COP9 as was originally planned. Nevertheless, he suggested that we need to find ways to use the MA material and get it out in our own work. **Heather MacKay** urged that we cross-reference back to the MA throughout our own guidance but that we do not try to repackage the MA’s results themselves. **Christine Prietto** asked whether we know if the MA Wetlands and Water Synthesis is out there, if people are using it, if it’s too complicated for some audiences. **Heather MacKay** replied that we would need to decide how much effort we would wish to put into determining that.
58. **Jo Mulongoy** inquired why the MA’s findings have been a low priority for Ramsar, given their importance. **The DSG** explained that at the time of our COP9 the Wetlands Synthesis was six months over schedule and was not received in time for discussion, so that the Parties did not understand its significance.
59. Concerning **task 16** on developing new guidance tools based on prior identification of gaps, **Randy Milton** recommended that this be deferred until the completion of those other tasks. Regarding **tasks 17 and 18** concerning fisheries, he recommended revisiting those tasks following the completion of the Wellcome paper on fisheries for the Ramsar Technical Report series.
60. **Randy Milton** introduced **task 19** on guidance for the implementation of Resolution IX.14 on *Wetlands and poverty reduction*, and **Paul Mafabi** explained that that had been a very important issue at Ramsar COP9. **The DSG** drew attention to Wetlands International’s Wetlands and Livelihoods Working Group and urged that the progress of that group and others be followed on the Support Service forum and taken up again at the STRP midterm workshops. **The SG** noted that this is a very important issue that cannot be approached in the same way as the others; he suggested that we need to see how all of our other work can contribute to the issue of poverty reduction. He felt that it was a mistake to give it a low priority and urged that the STRP should recommend elevating its priority. **Jo Mulongoy** agreed that the issue should have a higher priority.
61. **Max Finlayson** noted that IWMI’s Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (CA) will have a lot of material on this issue and will be launched at the Stockholm Water Week in August. **Teresita Borges** urged that this work should be linked with the work of other conventions.
62. **The DSG** made a distinction between issues that are a high priority for the Convention and those that are a high priority for the scientific and technical work of the Panel. Assigning a low priority to an STRP task does not at all mean that the issue itself is a low priority for the Convention.

Decision STRP13-3: The Panel agreed to note the great importance that the issue of wetlands and poverty reduction has for the Ramsar Convention; it determined to monitor the progress of WI’s Wetlands and Livelihoods Working Group and other processes and requested the Wise Use Working Group lead to report back to the midterm workshops.

63. **Randy Milton** noted **task 20** on considering the relevance of tools for cross-biome planning and suggested that this is something that everyone should remain aware of.

31 May 2006

Agenda item 7.6: Wetlands and human health

64. **The DSG** provided background on **task 163**, as outlined in Working Paper 6, and noted that the STRP Oversight Committee did not appoint a thematic expert to lead on this issue. He noted that the MA had little on wetlands and human health but drew attention to the FAO's interest in the issue. He noted its relevance to avian flu issues and thanked David Stroud for representing the STRP on the CMS avian flu task force. He also noted connections with issues of livelihoods and poverty reduction and with the Panel's tasks on water management. The DSG highlighted the key messages of the MA's health synthesis as a good starting place.
65. **Mike Acreman** noted that WHO has a Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control (PEEM) that deals with such responses as controlling water levels for mosquitoes.
66. **The SG** said that this is an issue that we have to grapple with, as the Convention is being drawn into this discussion. He said that the key is the concept of illness vs. wellness, and that "promoting wellness" is our issue. He noted that the Millennium Development Goals are often in conflict with environmental values, and this presents a good opportunity to look at solutions to that. The SG said that we need a good body of work already prepared for when something new like the avian flu epidemic comes along, as all of the conventions responded to the avian flu on an emergency basis, not through preparation. We should be able to put a solid policy base in place at COP10.
67. **Jo Mulongoy** noted that the CBD has had some collaboration already with Ramsar and others, but has had trouble collaborating with WHO on this issue. He added that we must keep in mind that wetlands are also a source of medicinal plants and animals, as well as of nutrition. **Paul Mafabi** said that sometimes wetlands are the source of the only medicines available to some people. **Teresita Borges** noted that there is a linkage there with the CBD's work on traditional knowledge.
68. **David Stroud** observed that this is an area with a lot of work going on and that it is essential to be clear about our target audience, i.e., do we intend a health message for wetland people or wetland messages for health people. **Max Finlayson** described work being done in the CGIAR context and said that he would report further in a few weeks.
69. **The Chair** suggested that the list of issues in Working Paper 6 could be grouped into four categories: 1) the impacts on human health due to wetland modification, e.g., environmental flows, land use; 2) impacts due to pollution pressures on human health; 3) promoting wellness, e.g., spiritual benefits, medicines, nutrition; and 4) impacts of disease on wetland dependent species, e.g., avian flu.
70. **The DSG** suggested that there should be one review document on these themes, and that it should draw out two "key messages" for the two audiences mentioned by David Stroud. He saw a need for someone with broad knowledge in the field to take the lead. He proposed to scope out a plan of work; talk with WHO, FAO, and CGIAR about their work in progress; identify an appropriate consultant; and bring a product to the STRP midterm workshops.
71. **Beatriz Torres (GBIF)** noted that in addressing vectors of disease there is a need for access to the vast knowledge of the large and small groups of the science community, a need to integrate biodiversity data with environmental and geospatial data, for example. There is too much isolation among people working in the field and, she said, we need a new way of working.

Decision STRP13-4: The STRP agreed that Nick Davidson and Max Finlayson should lead in scoping the work, in discussion with WHO, CGIAR, FAO, and others, and identifying a consultant, to begin soon and with a view to a draft product ready by the STRP midterm workshops. The Working Group to assist in scoping should include FAO (Lucilla Spini or other representative to be identified), Max Finlayson, Rebecca Tharme (IWMI), David Stroud, CBD (Jo Mulongoy), and a representative from WHO's PEEM (to be invited).

Agenda item 7.4: Ramsar site designation and management

72. **David Stroud**, thematic lead for Working Group 3, described **task 109** on making the new Criterion 9 operational, and he proposed a schedule for working with the IUCN Specialist Groups for data for the 1% threshold, awareness-raising about the Criterion and disseminating that widely, developing an ongoing, rolling update process with the Specialist Groups, and finalizing the publication of an RTR history of the Ramsar site selection process.
73. Concerning **task 104** on under-represented wetland types, **David Stroud** proposed contracting a consultant to prepare the review using the TOR agreed in 2004. For **task 107**, concerning a review of existing guidance on designating specific types of wetlands, he suggested using a questionnaire targeted to those responsible for site selection from a representative sample of Ramsar sites. Concerning **task 112** on keeping the Criteria and designation guidelines under review, he noted that that is largely an ongoing task but suggested that a consultant should be engaged to prepare additional guidance on the designation of human-made wetlands.
74. **David Stroud** continued with a review of lower-priority **tasks 105** on biogeographical regionalization, **106** on a revised RIS, **108** on the ecological roles played by reservoirs and other human-made wetlands, **110** on the fish Criteria and guidance, **126** on wetland restoration guidelines, **127** on restoration methodologies, and **128** on guidance on compensation for wetland losses.
75. **The Chair** noted that task 107 on reviewing guidance on site designations of specific types could be combined with the Resolution VIII.45 work on the effectiveness of guidance generally. **The DSG**, concerning task 110, reported that the Secretariat is finding that Parties are having difficulty in applying the fish Criteria and suggested that a questionnaire for the relevant RIS compilers might lead to improvements in the RIS guidance. **Max Finlayson** felt that Criterion 8 on fisheries needs to be updated.
76. **Max Finlayson** described a project proposal by IWMI and partners, "Global Wetland Mapping and Inventory", part of the purpose of which is to make the IWRB/IUCN/WWF regional wetland directories of the 1980s and '90s available on-line and allow plotting Ramsar sites against WWF biomes, etc.
77. **The DSG** called this a tremendous step forward which shows the increased utility of Ramsar sites information. He suggested that the directories could be thought of as lists of candidate Ramsar sites. **Rebecca D'Cruz** noted that some of the sites listed in the 1989 Directory of Asian Wetlands no longer exist. **The DSG** suggested asking the Parties to look at the Directories on-line and report on the present status of those wetlands in their National Reports. That could help to gauge whether Ramsar designation itself has been a useful tool to ensuring the continuance of the wetlands.
78. **Mark Spalding** reported that TNC have adopted WWF's system of realms, ecoregions, and biomes, but that there is no accepted global map of coastal and ocean biogeographies. The first draft of TNC's Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOW) is already available, and WWF is developing a scheme of freshwater ecoregions of the world. He drew a distinction between regional schemes based upon habitats and upon taxonomies, both of which are important.

79. **Dave Pritchard** observed, concerning under-represented wetland types, that there is presently no way of (or targets for) determining under-representation in species, though some indicators of effectiveness mention that. He felt that that might be an area for future work. **Beatriz Torres** and **the DSG** noted that collaboration with the GBIF interactive database, with its taxonomic focus, could be useful. **Mark Spalding** cautioned that when discussing regionally representative wetlands, protected areas are often protected precisely because they stand out from the surrounding region and are not representative.
80. **Paul Mafabi** inquired about progress in establishing and showing the boundaries of Ramsar sites. **The DSG** acknowledged the difficulty of getting digital boundaries from the Parties and noted that Wetlands International is working on that in discussions with the European Environment Agency and UNEP-WCMC. So far, he said, the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) has digital boundaries for only two countries.
81. **Alan Wentz (Ducks Unlimited USA)** reported on DU's mapping intended for landscape-scale management and noted the problem of compatibility of data sets.
82. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui** observed that when there are boundary changes during times of drought, politics may come into play.
83. **Roy Gardner** offered to assist in the parts of the tasks dealing with "no net loss" and mitigation policies. **Mark Smith** offered IUCN's help to the Working Group.

Agenda item 7.2: Inventory, assessment, monitoring, and indicators

84. **Teresita Borges**, thematic expert for this group, listed the several key tasks and identified the task force leads for each of them.
85. **Doug Taylor (WI)** provided a demonstration of the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) and described the ongoing discussions on a joint IOPs' proposal for collaborative site monitoring (Working Paper 3, annex 1). **The DSG** and **Doug Taylor** described the difficult time sequencing of the various parts of **task 52**, all of which are of immediate priority but which all depend one upon another. They must begin with an assessment of what data/information is needed and the possible revision of the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS). It was noted that going back to the Parties on their data needs would be time-consuming. **The DSG** observed that if fundamental changes to the RIS are to be proposed, it would be valuable to alert the Parties sooner rather than later.
86. **Bruce Gray** alluded to the forthcoming results of an Australia-New Zealand workshop on description of ecological character and noted that Australia will soon be finalizing site mapping specifications as well. He said that Australia is quite comfortable with the RIS in its present form and would prefer to append more detailed information on ecological character to the present RIS. **David Stroud** noted that different bodies within the Parties have different data needs, which must be considered as well.
87. **The DSG** said that one option, first discussed by STRP in the last triennium, could be to think of the RIS and the description of ecological character as an hierarchical, two-phase process, i.e. that the RIS provides the basis for the justification of the Criteria - currently much of the other RIS information has to do with management issues rather than the designation itself. With this approach, one would look at the RIS as the designation document, so that we could reduce the information needed on the RIS, making it shorter and focused on designation only. The other fields could be removed to a second document, not required for designation, but which could be

submitted at the same time or as soon as possible thereafter. There are various options to this which could be trialed with the Parties.

88. **Doug Taylor** drew attention to other data needs on wetlands more generally and the RIS's role in that. He stressed the need for more debate before consultations with the Parties.
89. It should be noted that the RISs are presently the principal information documents for the public on each Ramsar site, especially now that WI has made them available on the RSIS, and that reducing the RISs to Criteria justifications would undermine that function; reliance upon second-phase descriptive documents that would not be required for designation would not contribute to that public purpose, as history shows that Parties would not normally submit additional information promptly unless it is required for getting a Ramsar site listed.
90. **The DSG** agreed that we shouldn't rush the process, as they are very complex tasks. If the changes to the RIS process are to be big and significant enough, they cannot be fully developed in a short space of time – there is an option to see this as an ongoing task to be initiated now and continued as a work in progress into the next triennium if necessary.
91. **Beatriz Torres** noted that a lot of resources have gone into the development of the RSIS and asked how it was connected to the world database of protected areas. She offered a number of other specific questions about the experience of the RSIS, and **the Chair** invited her to consult with Doug Taylor bilaterally on those issues.
92. **The SG** noted the option for considering this as an ongoing task, but, since it is so central to the work of the Convention, he dissuaded from putting it off to COP11 in 2011. He said that if the problem is just one of resources, they could be mobilized before COP10.
93. **The Chair** called for a break-out session to continue consideration of these issues and report back to the plenary.
94. **Teresita Borges** introduced **task 59** on effectiveness indicators, and **Eleni Fitoka** (EKBY) provided a thorough presentation on the MedWet / CODDE project.
95. **Dave Pritchard** provided a update on the ongoing STRP development of effectiveness indicators and reviewed the types of products expected. He noted that national reporting for COP10 needs to speak to the indicators and urged the need for a collaborative link with the SC's work on the National Report Format. He observed that we need a plan for the reports and statements expected from the assessment of indicators, an indication of what the expected end point should be. He invited comments via the STRP Support Service fora on the proposed second tranche of five indicators. **Mark Spalding** inquired whether the indicators are meant to be measured at site or global scales, and **Dave Pritchard** replied that the suite of indicators is intended to be a mix of scales.
96. **Teresita Borges** introduced **task 53** on delineating and mapping of wetlands, and **Max Finlayson**, the task leader, explained that **tasks 53 and 54** are encompassed in the partnership proposed by FAO. **Lucilla Spini** explained that the FAO, through the Coastal Panel of the Global Terrestrial Observing System (C-GTOS), and IWMI are proposing a WSSD-Type II Partnership on wetland mapping and inventory for monitoring and assessment on global, regional and national scales, in support of Ramsar and other biodiversity-related conventions. The collaboration would address task 53 but also tasks 49 and 50, and it is foreseen that the partnership's work would emerge both in Ramsar draft Resolutions and in the work of other MEAs, in the Biodiversity Liaison Group, and in 2010 target issues.

97. **Max Finlayson** called for a break-out group to itemize leads and timetables, and **the DSG** stressed the need for the specific STRP tasks to be addressed within the work of the partnership.
98. Concerning **task 55** on a review of MAB procedures for Biosphere Reserve Integrated Monitoring (BRIM), **the DSG** noted that the BRIM work is still in progress, and **Dave Pritchard** suggested that where the BRIM might be most helpful would be in the areas of socio-economic factors and integrated monitoring, rather than in ecological concerns. It was agreed that the DSG and Dave Pritchard would review with the MAB Secretariat the state of progress and suggest a way forward at the midterm workshops.
99. **The DSG** put forward an additional task concerning environmental impact assessment that grows out of the CBD's work. The CBD has now adopted new guidelines that supersede the former ones and has added guidance on Strategic Impact Assessment (SEA), and has requested the STRP to review these. He felt that it would be appropriate, as the CBD's lead partner on inland waters, to bring such a review forward to COP10. He noted that both Ramsar and CBD Secretariats are represented on the steering committee of the IAIA's Dutch-financed project (CBBIA) for incorporating biodiversity in impact assessments in developing countries.
100. **Dave Pritchard** reported that he has identified a colleague to assist with this work but this needs to be confirmed. He foresaw a single exercise to review the guidelines for both CMS and Ramsar.

Agenda item 7.3: Water resources management

101. **Mike Acreman**, thematic expert for Working Group 4, addressed **tasks 81 and 82** on the development of more detailed guidance and case studies on River Basin Management (RBM) and the critical path approach, and he indicated that the target audience should be wetland specialists and managers, to arm them for discussions with RBM people, and not the RBM people themselves. There could also be Ramsar input and collaboration with, for example, the Global Water Partnership and its Technical Advisory Committee to produce RBM planning and management materials with a wetlands focus.
102. On **task 91** on wetlands and water quality, **Mike Acreman** said that this is a long process and suggested a background review followed by a plan for future work on a longer time scale. Several people noted that a review on water quality would overlap slightly with work on water quality indicators of effectiveness, and that collaboration would be needed. **George Lukacs, Mark Smith,** and **Karén Jenderedjian** volunteered to assist. **Jo Mulongoy** pointed out the relevance of the first CBD/Ramsar technical report, which is now available on the CBD Web site [and was subsequently handed out in hard copies]. **Rebecca Tharme** brought up a number of additional issues, and it was urged that the scoping exercise should continue on the Support Service fora.
103. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui** reported that the CCD's Africa programme has a thematic area that is relevant and could collaborate. **Heather MacKay** noted that the low-priority **task 86** on wetlands in drylands could possibly be addressed in collaboration with the CCD, and the **DSG** recommended that all STRP work on water quality and quantity should pay attention to drylands. **Heather MacKay** urged that the water resources team should work with the CCD to see if they have any material that would be directly useful in relation to Task 86.
104. **Heather MacKay** reviewed the critical path method as applied to river basin management and the role of the Ramsar guidance within that. **Mike Acreman** said that the objective is to provide additional information for managers to adapt the diagram and process for their own situations, to develop a generic approach with the means to tailor it to specific situations.

105. **George Lukacs** noted that the method described covered surface waters but not groundwater. **Mike Acreman** and **Heather MacKay** agreed that RBM naturally looks first at surface waters and the treatment will have to be cross-referenced to the groundwater framework guidance.
106. **Mike Acreman** took up **task 89** and provided background on the progress of the reports on environmental flow requirements intended as Ramsar Technical Reports (RTRs) and the recommendations for the subsequent preparation of guidelines for the Parties. The task lead, **Rebecca Tharme (IWMI)**, suggested that some of the work could begin straightaway, as some case studies and other materials are already available. She noted that The Nature Conservancy has extensive materials, and **Mark Smith** reported that IUCN has a number of case studies as well.
107. **Rebecca Tharme** reported that the group recommended that the product should be an RTR rather than formal guidance, given the sensitivity of the subject. She noted that some of the context-specific advice would be based upon the obstacles that have been found in some of the Parties. **The DSG** recalled that the COP adopted the task specifically calling for “guidelines” and that the Parties had the opportunity to protest about sensitivities at that time. He urged that the group go ahead and develop guidelines for the COP, casting them in politically sensitive language as far as possible, and let the Parties decide whether to take that advice or not. He called attention to IUCN’s 2003 publication “Flow”, which could be helpful as a base.
108. **Archana Chatterjee (WWF)** noted that different Parties are at different stages of development concerning environmental flows and wondered whether one set of guidelines would be sufficient for all countries. **Rebecca Tharme** responded that one set of guidance is foreseen, taking account of varying conditions and contexts within it. **The DSG** noted that a decision-tree structure can help readers place themselves according to their own situations.
109. **Mike Acreman** reported that on **task 85** concerning ICZM the group recommended splitting the task into a review of the present COP8 guidelines on ICZM in light of other organizations and the lessons of the tsunami, and then deciding whether and how to proceed to developing further guidance. It would be determined at that time whether any new guidance would complement and update the existing guidance or replace it. Following the review, it can be decided whether additional case studies would be needed, and if so, that would be coordinated with the clearinghouse for case studies for other tasks.
110. **Doug Taylor (Wetlands International)** noted that the Green Coast project of WI, WWF, IUCN, and Oxfam could provide peer review. **Lucilla Spini** offered to put the group in touch with the appropriate people in the FAO’s programmes. **Mark Spalding** reported that TNC has a database of some 800 ICZM projects. **Teresita Borges** noted that there are thousands of ICZM projects and it might be more interesting for Ramsar to find cases of the integration of the terrestrial and coastal zones.
111. **Mike Acreman** turned to **task 90** on groundwater issues and recommended producing the technical report by the midterm workshops and then the further guidance on groundwater management strategies, with consultancy help. **Mark Smith (IUCN)** indicated willingness to be involved.
112. **Mike Acreman** noted the lower priority **task 87** on a review of water and environmental law with respect to environmental flows and suggested that the part concerning implementation could be covered under task 89. As to the review of water law, he offered to discuss with contacts at the International Water Law Programme at the University of Dundee whether a student could get that started. **The DSG** noted that the task is also relevant to the existing guidelines on Laws and Institutions and on National Wetland Policies, both of which need looking at to see whether updates or new guidance are needed.

113. On further low priority tasks, **Mike Acreman** indicated that for **task 83** on consolidated guidance on River Basin Management Heather MacKay will review Handbook 4 in light of the results of COP9 and report back. For **task 84** on a bibliography on impacts of dams on wetland and river systems, he suggested looking at the products of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) to see if that would be sufficient. **David Stroud** noted that that could be linked with task 108 on reservoirs. **Rebecca Tharme** recalled that the task originally included the positive side of the ecosystem services of dams and wondered whether it might not be time to begin that work. **Mike Acreman** noted that Matthew McCartney of IWMI may have progressed this and that Max Finlayson will consult with him. **The DSG** urged him to see whether there is anything available that can be put together quickly. **Max Finlayson** noted the need to be aware of Latin American sensitivities to artificial wetlands being used as an excuse to permit degradation of natural wetlands.
114. **Mike Acreman** proposed a two-stage process, with the review first and then a decision about whether guidance is needed. **Heather MacKay** recalled that the annotated bibliography on impacts of dams was proposed as a response to a call from the COP for still more guidance on this issue after initial reluctance to fully adopt the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams. **The DSG** proposed that we scope out the work now and then seek someone who would do it at no cost, and otherwise, let it go.
115. **Viorel Blujdea (UNCCD CST)** reported that the Parties to the UNCCD have decided upon improving synergies with the other MEAs and plan a scientific meeting in Arusha on climate change, the results of which may be useful. He offered his collaboration and input to this work.
116. **Mike Acreman** noted that **task 88** is largely covered in the other tasks requiring case studies.

Agenda item 7.5: Wetlands and agriculture

117. **Max Finlayson**, WG5 lead, drew attention to **task 150** calling for guidelines on good agriculture practices for different wetland types, and noted that IWMI's CA will cover much of the needed material. He reported that a consortium has been formed, including Ramsar, FAO, IWMI, Wageningen University, MedWet, and Wetlands International, to undertake a project called "Guidelines on Agriculture, Wetlands and Water Resources International Project", and he suggested that a small team isolate the most important questions from those prepared by the STRP in the last triennium and listed in Working Paper 8. He said that experts would be invited to prepare a discussion paper and workshop.
118. **Rebecca Tharme** noted that the consortium proposal was presented at the Fourth World Water Forum and that some funding has already been secured, enough for Wageningen University to begin and FAO to develop a framework. Slovenia has offered to host the workshop, for which funding is being sought. After that, a small writing team will begin. She urged that the project should be tracked on the Support Service forum for feedback from the STRP. If funding can be found, the guidance can be prepared and tested in 5-10 countries and then proposed to COP10.
119. **The DSG** recalled that Resolution VIII.34 foresaw a review preceding the development of guidance. **Rebecca Tharme** explained that there is now momentum and funding for developing the framework, but not yet for reviewing existing work; she noted, however, that the CA partially fulfills that need, and part of the framework will include a short review. She said that FAO and Wageningen University would be encouraged to ensure that that is included.
120. **Jo Mulongoy** described the CBD's programme of work on agricultural biodiversity.

Agenda item 7.8: CEPA

121. **Christine Prietto**, thematic group lead, explained that no set tasks have been outlined for Working Group 8 in advance and that the group will try to build onto others' tasks by contributing advice on target audiences, formats, etc. She went through a list of 18 areas where CEPA advice would seem beneficial but cautioned on the need for prioritization. These included networking with the NFPs; presentation of guidance, national reporting, and questionnaires; needs assessment of on-line resources; application of the critical path method; tools for talking to different sectors, such as industry; summaries of technical papers; and databases available to the Parties. She noted that she thought that a lot of the products being discussed by the STRP are not very well targeted, and that the target group often should be the group making the most impact on wetlands. **The DSG** added the desirability of CEPA advice on completing the wetland managers' field guide from last triennium.
122. **Chris Prietto** said she plans to go to the Wetlands International CEPA Specialist Group and seek volunteers to join the STRP Working Groups. She described the background of the Specialist Group and its 17 members, who have been briefed on what is involved in assisting the STRP. She noted that when Specialist Group members join each WG, they will need a WG member to familiarize them with the process.
123. **Dave Pritchard** suggested that the STRP would also welcome any general advice on the Panel's products, such as footnotes, indexes, key messages, and use of jargon. **Heather MacKay** suggested a generic CEPA training manual for STRP members, but **Chris Prietto** suggested that a live exercise would be better.
124. **Paul Mafabi** urged the importance of assessing the need for guidance to ensure that it is demand-driven. **The DSG** said that perhaps there should be a CEPA training guide for the Parties' representatives; when they ask for guidelines it should be assumed that they really mean it, but do they? Something may be wrong with that part of the process.
125. **The Chair, Heather MacKay**, summarized that the top priority for the CEPA group should be assisting in getting responses for task 5 on the review of existing Ramsar guidance, which might require funding; preparing a training manual for the STRP; and going through the remaining tasks arising from CEPA links in the thematic work areas, to select additional immediate priorities.

1 June 2006

Agenda item 9: Current and emerging issues

Agenda item 9.1: Avian influenza

126. **The Chair** outlined COP9 Resolution IX.23 and the background paper on the avian flu epidemic.
127. **David Stroud**, the thematic group lead, made a PowerPoint presentation on the spread of the avian flu epidemic, its economic consequences, and the relative role of migratory waterbirds in its spread. He explained that he is representing the STRP on the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, which is sponsored by CMS, AEWA, FAO, WHO, OIE, Ramsar, BLI, WI, etc., and is intended to agree common positions on the issues. He drew attention to the CMS seminar in Nairobi in April and Nick Davidson's presentation to CBD COP8 in March. He suggested that the Ramsar Web site and Forum e-mail list should be used to disseminate relevant information better, including EFSA risk assessment, the CMS Nairobi conclusions, and the European Commission guidance on surveillance standards, and he urged a wider role for other STRP members. He said that he intends to post a monthly update on the Support Service.
128. **The DSG** agreed that we should use the Web site and e-lists more for this purpose; he reported that the Secretariat has received questions from the Parties, especially about surveillance, and he

stressed that the EU standards for surveillance should be made more widely available. He saw a potential role for STRP regional members to keep the NFPs up to date. **David Stroud** noted that the EU approach to measuring the presence of avian flu is to look for dead birds rather than to sample living flocks, the latter being unhelpful since the percentage of affected birds is so low.

129. **Sergey Dereliev (CMS and AEWA)** said that the CMS/AEWA Task Force information, like minutes, would be useful for the STRP but not for the public. Other products, however, could be valuable on the Ramsar Web site. A common set of consolidated advice on behalf of CMS, AEWA and Ramsar on sampling techniques for HPAI in wild birds requested by the Government of Georgia is being prepared and consulted within the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza. The consolidated advice will be ready in early June and sent to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia. **The DSG** proposed that a short summary of the internal minutes of the Task Force telephone conferences could be prepared for the public.
130. **Sergey Dereliev** reported that four months of help is available to the CMS Secretariat to assist Marco Barbieri in preparing a common Web site for the public, with UNEP, and with input from all other bodies through the Secretariat.
131. **Alan Wentz (Ducks Unlimited USA)** noted that in North America some 100,000 birds have been sampled, as well as some 50,000 sites, though no instances of the disease have been found there. There are several Web sites on the subject. **Sergey Dereliev** noted that the Wildlife Conservation Society is a North American member of the Scientific Task Force.
132. **David Stroud**, referring to COP9 Resolution IX.23, noted that there have been instances of lethal actions and that Ramsar interventions have been helpful in some cases. **The DSG** noted that the Standing Committee had affirmed this role in Decision SC34-15. **Rebecca D’Cruz** noted that the COP Resolution is not known to many people working with this problem and its message needs to be better disseminated.
133. **David Stroud** observed that several organizations have FAQs Web sites and suggested that the Ramsar Web site provide links to them. **Maria Rivera** stressed the need for reliable information for the countries, as the media are frequently supplying bad information; she felt that we need to ensure that the AAs and NFPs are made aware of the sources of the Scientific Task Force and Ducks Unlimited and others. **Karén Jenderedjian** noted that the advice coming from various kinds of organizations (veterinary, agriculture, environment, health, etc.) is often contradictory and suggested the need for a digest of the best advice on the Ramsar Web site.
134. **Dave Pritchard** noted that the strong feature of the various COP decisions is the unanimity of the scientific positions and advice, and he urged that we should continue to reflect and emphasize that unanimity. Thus, he said, all pronouncements should best be made on a joint basis or emphasize other agreements that concur. STRP comments and consensus could be made via the Support Service and communicated by David Stroud to the Task Force.
135. **Beatriz Torres (GBIF)** said that the question is what kinds of data are needed right now and how can we get it? What plans are there to integrate the data on the 26 high-risk species with other kinds of data? **David Stroud** indicated that there is a lot of data already but a lack of funding to work with it; he noted that the WI methodology is very useful.
136. **The Chair** noted agreement that we need to increase the flow of information to the Parties, backed by the credibility of the STRP, and that we need a place on the Ramsar Web site where people can go for links and updates. **Sergey Dereliev** noted that the Web site being developed by CMS is meant to do just that, and it would be better to have one go-to place for all of the MEAs. **David Stroud** said that the Ramsar Web site is extraordinarily well known and can highlight news

on the What's New section, but it would be best to point readers to a common dedicated Web site, i.e., the CMS-sponsored site, for authoritative information.

137. **Paul Mafabi** recalled the SC decision and noted a need to develop a mechanism for long-term monitoring, rather than just a one-off, and saw a role for the STRP in that. He said that the STRP NFPs could help in integrating national efforts but would need to be better informed.
138. **Sergey Dereliev** alluded to the massive culling of wild birds in one country, which is a Ramsar Party but not a party to CMS or AEWa, and said that in such cases it is better to respond individually rather than to all Parties. An official response from the Secretariat, drawing upon Ramsar Resolution IX.23 and with STRP advice, could be helpful. **The DSG** promised that the Secretariat would follow up on this issue with the Contracting Party concerned. The DSG reminded the meeting of the terms of Resolution IX.23, recalled that the Standing Committee has recently reaffirmed that killing is not the solution, and suggested that the STRP reaffirm that position again through a Decision. **David Stroud** pointed to the need for more attention to how countries share experience and said that the Task Force needs lessons learnt from national responses.
139. **Tobias Salathé, Senior Advisor for Europe**, said that it would be urgent and valuable for David Stroud to relate back to Ramsar the latest in what advice we can give, the same advice across all the MEAs with the Task Force as the common point; he felt that we should rely upon David Stroud as our authority for forthcoming developments.
140. **Lei Guangchun, Senior Advisor for the Asia/Pacific**, reported that the East Asian-Australasian Flyway has set up a working group or partnership, which is being finalized within the flyway countries, and it would be good to link up with that.
141. **Sergey Dereliev** noted that often environment ministers are ignored and not in the loop of national responses, so that communicating with the AAs may often be useless. He urged that the Convention communicate to the Parties through the diplomatic channel as well. **The DSG** agreed.

Decision STRP13-5: Having reviewed recent developments, the STRP reaffirmed the importance and continued relevance of Resolution IX.23 and the recent Standing Committee decision on this matter. The Panel determined that the Ramsar Web site should provide a prominent link to the CMS-sponsored common Web site on avian flu. The Panel requested the Secretariat to prepare a diplomatic notification communicating to the Parties this decision on avian flu and its reaffirmation of Resolution IX.23, and it requested David Stroud to post frequent updates to the Support Service forum on avian flu and wherever appropriate additional news and comments for the Ramsar Web site. The Panel will review the matter at the midterm workshops and determine whether any additional proposals should be made to Ramsar COP10 for consideration.

Agenda item 9.2: ESA GlobWetlands update

142. **Diego Fernandez (European Space Agency-ESRIN)** made a PowerPoint presentation of the GlobWetlands project and its focus on wetland assessment and monitoring. Some 50 wetlands (mostly Ramsar sites) in 21 countries have been chosen as pilot studies in gathering data called for in needs assessments from the countries, and the project is now in its final stages of production and validation of the products, hopefully to be completed by the end of the summer. He requested STRP advice in the definition and preparation of user manuals for the products and future work, and he invited STRP participation in the GlobWetland Symposium set for 19-20 October 2006 at the ESA headquarters in Frascati near Rome.

143. **Mike Acreman** asked about the time series for the earth observations, and **Diego Fernandez** indicated that they could be two-weekly, according to satellite passages over the site, but are presently seasonal. **Eleni Fitoka** asked whether there are plans to extend site-based observations to regional scales, and he explained that the method is intended for use on many scales, but the users in the pilot projects were more interested in site- than basin-scales. It can be extended later, even to global scales. He said that all products are intended to be freely available, both on the interactive Web site and as downloadable products. **Archana Chatterjee** asked whether the software will be included, and he indicated that essential software to use the products will be freely downloadable, but will not be competitive with sophisticated commercial software.
144. **The Chair** and **the DSG** pointed out a number of other areas of the STRP's work programme that could benefit directly from the GlobWetland project, particularly those on mapping and delineation of sites. **Diego Fernandez** indicated that the user manuals can be anything we want them to be and urged STRP input through Doug Taylor, who is part of the project. It was agreed that he, Lucilla Spini, and Max Finlayson would meet to discuss the kinds of information needed for the user manual, the relevance of the products for the STRP's tasks, and the possibility of GlobWetland becoming involved in the FAO/IWMI Type II partnership on mapping and delineation.
145. **Philippe Gerbeaux** noted the continuing need for ground-truthing the earth observation data with local people. He suggested that the STRP regional members should network and identify the key people who should attend the GlobWetland Symposium.
146. **Dave Pritchard** observed that in the work on effectiveness indicators on change in ecological character the GlobWetland project has already been identified as useful, both for its products and for its methodologies (e.g., matching CORINE land cover/use data with Ramsar sites).
147. **Doug Taylor (WI)** noted that the key to the afterlife of the GlobWetland project is its connection with Ramsar and the building of an education and support network. He felt that it is important for the STRP NFPs to connect with the user groups, and he noted that the symposium will consider subsequent regional extensions.
148. There was discussion of what kinds of people could benefit from the Symposium in October and who from the Ramsar community should be encouraged to attend. **Diego Fernandez** indicated that the symposium could accommodate 150-300 participants and that resources could be found to support some key people. **Teresita Borges** suggested that the symposium be preceded by a capacity-building workshop, and he replied that ESA has the facilities for that if resources could be found. It was agreed to follow up on that suggestion. **The DSG** noted that it is the intention to publish the outputs of the Symposium as an article in a scientific journal.
149. **The SG** wished to put on record his appreciation for the cooperation of the ESA and its contribution to the work of the Convention and to the pilot sites. He gratefully acknowledged the ESA's efforts.

Agenda item 9.3: CBD COP8 and Inland Waters, and harmonized reporting issues

150. **The DSG** noted the close working relationship between Ramsar and the CBD, which serves as a model for other MEAs. He reported that at CBD COP8 a number of decisions mention Ramsar and take the relationship to a new phase. He said that the Third Ramsar/CBD Joint Work Plan (JWP3) ends in 2006 and that he and Jo Mulongoy would welcome the STRP's ideas on what scientific and technical issues should be included in the next one. He described CBD Decision VIII/20 in detail and noted the requests for Ramsar collaboration or leading, particularly with regards to poverty reduction, a national reporting framework, status and trends of inland waters,

impact assessment, island biodiversity, and biodiversity and climate change, many of them in relation to the 2010 target.

151. **Jo Mulongoy** agreed that the Ramsar/CBD relationship is a model for others and drew attention to the MOU signed by the heads of MEA secretariats in Brazil. He said that the CBD relies heavily upon Ramsar in several areas of work and other thematic areas. He particularly urged increased collaboration in case studies and CEPA efforts, and he noted that the STRP's work on indicators would be important for measuring the 2010 target. He indicated that the JWP4 to be developed should include more attention to emerging issues and to promoting communication between the NFPs of the two conventions. He suggested that the Clearing-House Mechanism and the GEF focal points could be useful to the STRP NFPs as well.
152. **Dave Pritchard** reported that the STRP's work on indicators has kept abreast of the CBD's work on 2010 indicators but has not been designed specifically to deliver the CBD's indicators for wetlands – although a number of the Ramsar indicators will do so. He noted several other areas of potential congruence, including those concerning cultural issues and on what Ramsar COP10 could consider as a way to move forward if there is agreement that the 2010 target will not be met.
153. **Teresita Borges** stressed the need for consultations with the Parties and a mandate from the concerned conventions as progress is made in the harmonization of national reporting. Concerning the planned programme of work on island biodiversity, she suggested contacting the Alliance of Small Island States and a review of the new Mauritius Strategy, which deals with impacts of climate change and biodiversity.
154. **Robert Pople (UNEP-WCMC)** welcomed joint reporting on inland waters and noted that UNEP-WCMC has been involved in work on MEA joint reporting issues. He reported that UNEP is convening a workshop on harmonized reporting, to be hosted by UNEP-WCMC, in mid-June 2006.
155. **The SG** noted that the 2010 targets are an important part of the work of the CBD and others related to biodiversity, but have not been as explicitly an important part of Ramsar's agenda, though much of our work relates to the achievement of the biodiversity target. He suggested that we should report to Ramsar COP10 on how our work is contributing. He foresaw problems in meeting the 2010 targets and suggested looking further into the future. **Paul Mafabi** said that the SC would welcome any contribution to defining the role of wetlands in achieving the 2010 targets and suggested demonstrating that contribution in a few pilot areas.
156. **Beatriz Torres** provided an update on recent GBIF progress and described a UK-funded project on how best the GBIF can support the measurement of the targets. She welcomed input on what biodiversity data needs to be mobilized in order to measure progress towards the targets. **Karén Jenderedjian** stressed the importance of Countdown 2010 and described a recent conference for the Caucasus region held in Georgia. **Ndegwa Ndiang'ui (UNCCD)** reported that a CST group of experts is dealing with benchmark measurements and noted that continued land degradation and soil erosion will negatively impact upon biodiversity and the 2010 target.
157. **Jo Mulongoy (CBD)** noted that, in terms of the three levels of biodiversity (ecosystem and biome, species, and genetic), we are not going to meet the targets globally, but we need to stress the very positive news in some ecosystems and sites. He seconded the idea of demonstrating contributions in a few pilot areas.
158. **The Chair** suggested that the indicators task force should try to build a response to the CBD into the group's work plan, and she urged that Margarita Astrálaga, Mike Acreman, and Jo Mulongoy consult about assisting the CBD's need for best practice case studies for the marine/coastal zone, to see how we can help the CBD and whether a consultant could take that on within the scope of

the water group's proposed work programme. **The DSG** asked everyone to review the current JWP and mention any key issues that should be included in the next one.

159. **Jo Mulongoy** indicated that the CBD's COP9 (in 2008) will review the programmes of work on forests, agriculture, the ecosystem approach, and invasive species, and that COP10 will review other areas, such as inland and marine/coastal waters and mountain biodiversity. **Beatriz Torres** suggested a joint Ramsar/CBD side event at the next SBSTTA meeting, and **the DSG** indicated that Ramsar will be participating in that meeting.

Agenda item 9.4: Issues arising from the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee

160. **The DSG** indicated that most of these issues have been covered already. In addition, the Standing Committee agreed that Dave Pritchard should work on the possible consolidation of COP Resolutions, with support from the Secretariat; that the theme of World Wetlands Day 2007 will be "wetlands and fisheries"; and that investigation should continue into a consortium approach to enhancing the Ramsar Sites Information Service.
161. **Paul Mafabi** noted that the SC also initiated the planning process for the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and said that the STRP should play a key role in that. He suggested that the STRP should request the SC to invite the Chair of the STRP to be involved in the Subgroup on that matter.

Decision STRP13-6: The Panel requested the Ramsar Standing Committee to include the Chair of the STRP in the membership of its Subgroup on the Strategic Plan.

Agenda item 9.5: Issues arising from COP9 decisions

162. **The Chair** indicated that most of these issues have been covered. **The SG** noted that there has also been established a working group on culture, which will begin its work in the second half of this year, and that Dave Pritchard will be closely involved and serve as the key link with the STRP. The STRP will be kept informed, but no specific STRP tasks are involved.
163. **The DSG** noted that the COP also called upon the Secretariat to bring ideas on transboundary wetland management to COP10.
164. **The SG** said that he had to honor other commitments over the next days but wished to record his thanks for the excellent contributions of all of the participants, and especially the Chair and Vice Chair.

Agenda item 9.6: Systematic conservation planning for aquatic ecosystems

165. **The Chair** explained the circulated paper on the project sponsored by WWF-US, TNC, and South Africa's Council on Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). **Rebecca Tharme** noted that TNC are defining an ecosystem biodiversity strategy for 2015 targets, and some STRP work is involved in that.
166. **Philippe Gerbeaux** reported that New Zealand has been progressing similar work and he will make that available for the STRP. **Dave Pritchard** noted that, though spatial planning and regional policy is a lower STRP priority task, it could benefit from this work. It was agreed that Heather MacKay would lead on providing updates on this work via the Support Service.

Agenda item 9.7: Any other relevant issues

167. **The DSG** noted that UNEP's fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) is in preparation and that UNEP has asked for the involvement of the MEAs. The first draft is ready for review and

Ramsar has been invited to comment, an open invitation to anyone interested in the review. He urged participants to consult the UNEP Web site, and to inform him if they plan to participate so that he can confirm our response to UNEP.

168. **Rebecca Tharme** noted that she and Max Finlayson are part of the writing team on the water chapter and are trying to include the MA results and Ramsar guidelines in the assessments and scenarios. She recommended that the regional members provide input. **The Chair** suggested that reviewers copy their remarks to the Support Service fora for the information of other members.
169. **Mike Acreman** inquired as to why the subject of wetlands and climate changes has not been included in the STRP's work plan, and he noted that the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) is working on these issues. **The DSG** explained that the STRP has provided a comprehensive review in the past, but it was resisted for political reasons; he recounted the COP's complicated instruction to the STRP involving gaining the IPCC's collaboration and why that could not be followed up. He suggested that the CEH's work might be a useful start to bringing back the topic for STRP as an ongoing issue. **Jo Mulongoy** promised to circulate the documentation that the CBD has developed on adaptations to climate change, and **David Stroud** noted that AEWA has passed a resolution starting work on a report on climate change impacts on waterbirds, with guidance for the Parties, resources permitting. **Teresita Borges** reported on the Commission on Sustainable Development's focus on adaptation and rehabilitation regarding climate change. **Rebecca Tharme** and **Archana Chatterjee** drew attention to other work presently being done on this issue.
170. **The DSG** summarized that the STRP can look at the CEH and others' work, including the STRP's COP8 Information Papers, in due course, and could perhaps resurrect the Ramsar paper, updated as necessary, for possible addition to the Ramsar Technical Reports series.
171. **Mark Smith (IUCN)** asked whether it would be possible to include guidance on climate change matters into all of the other STRP tasks. **Max Finlayson** applauded that approach but recalled that the COP and SC have not asked the STRP to do any work on this matter but have requested the Panel to prioritize the amount of its work further. **Paul Mafabi** suggested that work on climate change could be considered under Resolution IX.9 on the impacts of disasters.

Decision STRP13-7: The STRP expressed its recognition that there have been new developments regarding wetlands and climate change since Ramsar COP8, and the Panel recommended that the issue be brought back onto the agenda in the near future. The Panel asked Mike Acreman to report on the work of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to the midterm workshops and determined to consider the work of the CEH and AEWA at its 14th regular meeting.

172. On other issues from the sector-based guidance tasks, **the Chair** noted that **task 163** on human health has been dealt with and that, for **task 161** on a strategy for sector-based guidance, it was decided that the method used for human health should provide the model. On **task 162** on fisheries, **the DSG** suggested that the Panel look at the implications of Resolution IX.4 over the triennium and make a recommendation to COP10 on what should be done next. On **task 164** on tourism, **Sandra Hails** was asked to report on the resource page she is now testing for the Ramsar Web site, and it was agreed that the STRP will not pursue that task directly but will refer to that page in the CEPA section of the Ramsar Web site.
173. **Max Finlayson** initiated a discussion of the numbers of past tasks that have been given low priorities but carried over from one triennium to the next, suggesting that some may need to be cleared off the books. **The DSG** recalled that the immediate and high priorities are for this triennium but the overall work plan is meant to roll over on a six-year cycle, and so for some tasks the Panel could recommend that they have a higher priority in the next term. **Teresita Borges**

cautioned that some tasks might remain on the list forever, and suggested that the whole list should be reviewed rationally. **The DSG** suggested that the STRP's recommendations to the COP for the next triennium's work plan would be the time to do that, and that for the moment we are just reminding ourselves of the entire list. **Margarita Astrálaga** felt that it would be valuable to keep all of the past and present tasks on the list, especially for the new members; she noted that some are important issues that are presently being worked on through other processes but for which the STRP's attention is not needed at this time. **Paul Mafabi** noted that the next Strategic Plan might raise the profile of some issues, and that for some we might be able to draw on our partner organizations' work and thus benefit ourselves whilst building synergies at the same time. **Max Finlayson** urged that there should be some record kept of why the Panel has not addressed some tasks.

174. **Dave Pritchard** observed that the tasks at the bottom of the list tend to be the ones most generally framed and that it is the more precise ones that tend to get done. He suggested that the STRP should feed back to the SC and try to pin down the general tasks more precisely.
175. **The Chair** offered that she and the DSG will make a table of all of the tasks and show where each has come from and when. It will be posted on the Support Service with a request for input on other relevant work as well, and the list can be considered at the midterm workshops and the results reported to SC35.
176. Concerning **task 165** on forestry, **Lucilla Spini (FAO)** noted on behalf of the FAO Forestry Department that the Global Forest Resource Assessment 2005 has been made available, and she said that there will be a meeting 12-16 June 2006 on the Forest Resource Assessment for 2010, which will have a remote-sensing component. She invited informal suggestions and inputs, also taking into account the work on mangroves carried out by FAO.

Agenda item 10: The Ramsar Technical Reports series

177. **The DSG** reported on the purpose and present progress of the RTR series. He noted that there is a lot of valuable material, mainly from the STRP, which in the past has been presented to the COP only as Information Papers and then filed away or buried somewhere on the Ramsar Web site. The purpose of the series is to make this kind of material publicly available in a low-cost peer-reviewed downloadable series, one which is not tied to the timetable of seeking COP approval for formal guidelines. The authors will primarily be the STRP but other relevant papers will be welcome as well, to be reviewed by the STRP. The editors are the past and present Chairs of the Panel and the DSG, and the editing and layout is being done within the Secretariat. Present plans and resources allow for PDF versions for the Web, in English. Hardcopy publication and translations into the three Convention languages will be done when resources can be found; in fact, Swedish SIDA has already indicated that they will put some funds toward this purpose in 2006.
178. **The DSG** noted that RTR-1, the first volume of the Ramsar series, was actually published by the CBD as a joint contribution to its own series as well, and that RTR-2, on low-cost GIS applications, has just been finalized by the Secretariat and can be viewed, and is only awaiting better versions of the images before publication. He went on to list the other volumes which are already planned for the series. He noted that the views expressed will be the authors' own, and that that has been agreed by both the COP and the SC.
179. **David Stroud** urged that guidance for potential authors should be produced, and it was agreed that this was foreseen. **Dave Pritchard** reminded that there is no need to peer-review the republication of earlier STRP papers that were presented to the COP, unless they are being substantially updated. He also asked about the criteria used to decide whether something is best published as an RTR or by some other means. **The DSG** responded that, in general, anything that would have gone to the COP as an Information Paper, rather than as proposed guidance, would be

eligible for the series, but it will be up to the STRP to decide in each case. He and **the Chair** noted that it is also important to develop guidance for the Ramsar guidelines, and it was observed that some rules for the preparation of guidance were developed for the additional guidance on the designation of under-represented wetland types prepared for COP8.

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Agenda item 11: Finalization of the STRP work programme and task-based budget

180. **The Chair** explained that the leads of each of the Working Groups and task forces have, over the course of the week, prepared “pro formas” which define the tasks and outline the intended products and outputs, list the lead people as well as additional task force members and suggestions for invited experts, indicate the necessity or not of additional paid help and provide cost estimates of that, and project a timetable for the progress of the work. She invited each task leader to explain his or her pro forma and asked the participants to comment and advise, volunteer to assist, and eventually to formally adopt the pro forma as amended for inclusion in the proposed STRP Work Plan 2006-2008 for Standing Committee approval. She noted that at the same time the DSG would keep a running record of the cost estimates of each task so that the entire Work Plan can be costed relative to the priorities assigned to each of the tasks.
181. **The DSG** pointed out that the Secretariat is not permitted to co-lead on any of the tasks, but that technical staff members will be identified to help with each task and monitor its progress.
182. For Working Group 2 on the Wise Use and Ecological Character of Wetlands, thematic lead **Randy Milton** summarized **task 14** on wise use case studies, recommending that the output should be published as an RTR with a later determination whether any guidance would be appropriate. **Heather MacKay** noted that some of the case studies may overlap with those on water-related issues, and the midterm workshops would be a good time to collate them if possible.
183. For **task 15** on harmonization of terms and definitions (and the use of “ecosystem benefits/services”), **Randy Milton** proposed outputs of a review document for the STRP and an Information Paper for COP10. He noted that Royal Gardner has identified a graduate student who will prepare the preliminary document. **The DSG** recalled the chief purpose of the task, which is to learn how widely the MA terminology is coming to be used, i.e., whether or not it is becoming the standard. **Margarita Astrálaga** urged that the terminology used in national legislations should be surveyed as well, and **David Stroud** suggested that the terms used in the other Ramsar languages should be kept in mind. It was noted that Royal Gardner’s assistant works in both English and Spanish.
184. On **task 13** on the use of the MA Conceptual Framework, with Rebecca D’Cruz leading, **Randy Milton** said that the group recommended an information document for the STRP midterms, with a possible guidance document and Resolution for COP10. **The DSG** noted that this is a low-priority task with cost implications, but following considerable discussion of the importance of the MA’s work and the need to follow up on it whilst it is still topical, **Randy Milton, David Stroud, Ndegwa Ndiang’ui**, and **Heather MacKay** argued that the task should be assigned a higher priority, especially given the value of such an exercise to the other MEAs as well.

Decision STRP13-8: The STRP agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee that the priority of task 13 on elaborating ways to maximize the use of the MA Conceptual Framework should be elevated from a low to a high priority.

185. On **tasks 16 and 20** relating to cross-biome planning, it was noted that this is a low-priority task with cost implications. As the task originated with WWF, **Archana Chatterjee** agreed to discuss

with the head of the WWF Global Freshwater Programme, Jamie Pittock, whether WWF could help in a review of the guidance in this respect.

186. For **tasks 17 and 18** on fisheries, it was agreed to await the publication of the RTR volume on fisheries, the Comprehensive Assessment, and the work of the Panel's Wetlands and Agriculture Working Group, and then report to the midterm workshop on the way forward.
187. For **task 19** on poverty reduction, it was agreed to await the CA and the work of Wetlands International's Wetlands and Livelihoods Working Group and then report to the midterms on the way forward.

Decision STRP13-9: The STRP accepted the approaches proposed by the Working Group on the Wise Use and Ecological Character of Wetlands, taking account of the comments made in the discussion, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee.

188. Concerning wetland management tasks, thematic lead **David Stroud** noted that three low-priority tasks are included. For **task 126** on development of post-disaster restoration guidelines, he noted that development of the task will be assisted by FAO through provision for consideration by the STRP midterm workshops of planned FAO outputs such as those from the work of the C-GTOS Panel and the expected outputs of the FAO Regional Technical Workshop on "Coastal protection in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami: what role for forests and trees?".
189. For **task 127** on disseminating information on wetland restoration, it was agreed that David Stroud will explore the task with WI's Wetland Restoration Specialist Group and, at Sandra Hail's suggestion, he will examine the STRP's Wetland Restoration section on the Ramsar Web site, which was created chiefly by Bill Streever of the Society of Wetland Scientists and probably needs updating. **Rebecca Tharme** noted that the TNC Web site has a bibliography of 300 case studies on wetland restoration, and **Doug Taylor** said that IUCN Sri Lanka and Green Coast partners are working on restoration standards. **David Stroud** agreed to collate all of these sources.
190. For **task 128** on compensation for wetland losses, it was agreed that Royal Gardner will prepare a briefing paper on the North American experience of "no net loss" policies and mitigation. **Randy Milton** agreed to review a recent Canadian document on mitigation and US work on compensation issues.
191. **Archana Chatterjee** drew attention to the wetland managers' field guide still in preparation, and **the DSG** noted that the group will review the current draft of that and provide text on the way forward to be included in this pro forma.

Decision STRP13-10: The STRP accepted the approaches proposed by the task force on wetland management, taking account of the comments made in the discussion, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee.

192. **David Stroud** introduced the tasks relating to the revised *Strategic Framework and guidelines* and recommended a programme of work for **task 109** on making the new Criterion 9 on megafauna operational, to be disseminated in a Ramsar Technical Report. For **task 104** on interpretation of the term "under-represented", the group proposed that Max Finlayson and IWMI would lead work on that at small cost. For **task 112** on the ongoing review of site selection criteria, it was proposed that draft guidance will be put before the midterm workshops.
193. For **task 105** on biogeographic regionalization schemes, it was agreed that Max Finlayson and Mark Spalding will test the MEOW outputs for Ramsar utility. **Task 106** on a revised RIS, it was recommended, should be merged with task 52(ii). It was felt that **task 108** on reservoirs and other

human-made wetlands is unlikely to be progressed this triennium, though Sandra Hails reported that the Secretariat is in touch with UNEP GAP on a training scheme on waste water, the results of which will be provided to the task force. For **task 110** on the fish Criteria, it was felt that that might be incorporated as a subcomponent of the questionnaire to be developed with task 107. **The DSG** suggested that the Secretariat could analyze how the fish Criteria are presently being used by the Parties and saw that as a component of task 112.

Decision STRP13-11: The Panel accepted the approaches proposed by the task force on issues relating to the Strategic Framework, taking account of the comments made in the discussion, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee.

194. For the thematic area of water resources, **Mike Acreman** described the task force's plans for **tasks 81 and 82** on river basin management (RBM) and guidance on the critical path approach, as well as for **task 91** on wetlands and water quality. On **task 89** on environmental water requirements, lead **Rebecca Tharme** foresaw that a draft framework of guidelines would be ready for review before the midterm workshops. **Heather MacKay** noted that **task 85** on ICZM is largely rolled into the RBM task and, with the assistance of a student of Royal Gardner's, will combine analysis of case studies with those on RBM. **Doug Taylor** offered WI's assistance through the STRP Support Service, and **Jo Mulongoy (CBD)** said that the CBD would like to assist on this task. For **task 90** on groundwater issues, it was recommended that a detailed proposal for further guidance will be proposed to the midterm workshops following a background review.
195. For a number of additional low-priority tasks, the task force proposed rolling some into other tasks and, for others, awaiting further work by other bodies (**tasks 87, 80, 83, 84, 86, 88**).

Decision STRP13-12: The STRP endorsed the approaches proposed by the task force on water resources management, taking account of the comments made in the discussion, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee.

196. For the Working Group on Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring, and Indicators, **Dave Pritchard** explained the pro forma plan for advancing **tasks 59 and 60** on the first and second tranches of indicators of effectiveness.

Decision STRP13-13: The STRP accepted the approach proposed by Working Group 1 concerning further work on indicators of effectiveness, taking account of the comments made in the discussion, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee, and urged that STRP comments on the second tranche of indicators should be communicated via the Support Service by the end of July 2006.

197. Concerning the CBD indicators for the 2010 biodiversity target, **Dave Pritchard** reported that he has posted a document that matches the STRP effective indicators with the CBD's work, showing which ones seem relevant. **The DSG** noted that there are some differences in the purposes of the CBD and Ramsar approaches to indicators. **Dave Pritchard** suggested waiting to see how the STRP's work progresses before advising the CBD on how they can contribute to the CBD's target reporting.

Decision STRP13-14: The STRP agreed that Nick Davidson and Dave Pritchard should report to the STRP midterm workshops on how the STRP can contribute to the CBD's target indicators.

198. On Working Group 1's tasks on the Ramsar Information Sheet and Ramsar site data needs, task co-lead **Doug Taylor** led the discussion of **tasks 52(i), (ii), and (iii)**, noting that the timing of the various tasks will be difficult as their sequencing is interconnected. He observed that there is a fundamental issue of whether reporting on Ramsar sites should be improved incrementally or

fundamentally changed. **The DSG** suggested adding costs to the pro forma for someone to deal with the questionnaire on surveying Ramsar site data needs (task 52(i)) and to write up the results, which was agreed.

199. **Dave Pritchard** drew attention to the potential joint collaboration among the IOPs on site monitoring (Working Paper 3, annex 1). The IOPs plan to develop the proposal further and invite STRP input and comments on the second draft via the Support Service. He noted that part of that proposal would assist in delivering parts of tasks 52 and 54.

Decision STRP13-15: The STRP acknowledged the activities of the International Organization Partners acting as a group on wetland site monitoring and urged Panel members to comment on the 2nd draft of the proposal, when available, and consider where those activities can be fit into the STRP Work Plan.

200. **Doug Taylor** outlined the group's recommendations for **task 52(ii)** on reviewing the RIS form and guidance and proposed that, because of the sequence of parts of the tasks, a progress report should be readied for the midterm workshops and the task completed in the first half of 2007. He noted that he will consult with Secretariat staff about how to document the formal declarations of transboundary Ramsar site designations that Parties are making increasingly often.
201. **The DSG** urged that the three components of task 52 should be merged and in some cases re-sequenced in the Work Plan.
202. **Margarita Astrálaga** stressed that it is important not to try to carry out this task in too much haste. She noted that the Parties are tired of the rate of changing things, and that it is difficult enough to get them to update RISs using the newly-revised RIS forms. If further changes are to be made to the RIS, care should be taken that they will be the final ones, and it should not be rushed to be presented to COP10. **The DSG** noted that this is a major opportunity for the Convention, one which could stabilize the RIS approach to defining ecological character. If we get it right, he said, it will be simpler to cope with the COP's tweaking of the overall structure of the RIS, easier to handle future demands from the Parties as we have had to do after every COP.
203. **Doug Taylor** reminded that the task calls for a review and does not oblige any eventual changes at all. **Teresita Borges** noted that the Parties are the ones who will be affected by changes and they should be involved in consultations throughout the process, and she called for clear criteria for judging the value of any proposed changes. **Bruce Gray** echoed the sentiment that we must be very careful about the rate of change of the RIS, and he urged a link to the definitional work of the Working Group on Wise Use. **Heather MacKay** urged the necessity of a time scale for changes that is more sensitive to the Parties' needs and concerns.
204. **Doug Taylor** agreed that consultations will be necessary but are not included in the task as presently defined. He said that it is important to go to the SC and establish a time scale for consultations and identifying trial Parties, and that might derail completion of the work for this triennium. **The DSG** noted that in presenting the parts as a single task in the Work Plan, it should be stressed that this is an iterative process among the STRP, the SC, and the pilot Parties identified. He felt that the timetable will become clearer as the parts of the task develop, and he suggested elevating task 52 to the highest priority and blocking out some additional funds to ensure that they are available when needed.

Decision STRP13-16: The STRP accepted the approach proposed by the task force for progressing task 52 on Ramsar sites information reporting and data needs and for merging the parts of the task into one whole, and it recommended that the priority of the task should be elevated.

205. **Maria Rivera**, the task co-lead, reviewed the work proposed under **tasks 54 and 56** involving detecting and responding to change in ecological character and advising on the redesign of the Montreux Record Questionnaire. She said that she is aware of the difficulties the Parties have in reporting on change in ecological character when updating their RISs.
206. There was discussion of the cost estimates for consultancy time, and it was suggested that the first three parts of the tasks, the reviews, should be completed before the midterm workshops, at which time the way forward for completing the other proposed products could be decided.

Decision STRP13-17: The STRP accepted the approach proposed by the task force for progressing tasks 54 and 56 on reporting change in ecological character but urged the group to refine the timetable so that the review products will be ready in time for the midterm workshops.

207. Concerning regional networking, **the Vice-Chair, Rebecca D'Cruz**, described the results of the break-out session on this subject and proposed to prepare a report on the session to be posted for comment on the Support Service and included as Annex 1 to this report. She reported that the session identified the need for a two-page leaflet on the role of the STRP aimed at the NFPs and that Philippe Gerbeaux had agreed to lead on that, basing the content on the NFP TOR. The group also recognized the need for a ca.10-page manual on the roles and relationships of all Ramsar focal points in the Parties. It was recognized that there are cost implications concerning languages and place of publication, and **the DSG** noted that, as there is no task presently mandated in this area, the STRP must recommend to the SC that the development of regional networking should be elevated to an immediate priority with its own section in the Work Plan. There was further discussion of the possible costs and intended audiences of the two products mentioned, a leaflet for the STRP NFPs and a brochure for the Parties, and there were a number of volunteers to assist.
208. **The Vice-Chair** offered to write up a package of proposed actions on this matter and post it on the Support Service for comment.

Decision STRP13-18: The STRP agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee that the development of regional networking should be elevated to immediate priority and that a package of actions, including appropriate material targeted to the STRP National Focal Points and to the Parties, should be included, with a budget estimate, in the proposed STRP Work Plan for this triennium.

209. **Max Finlayson**, the task lead, described the work planned for **task 53** on delineating and mapping wetlands and the costs involved, and indicated that the work will be carried out in the context of the IWMI/FAO (GTOS) Type II partnership. **Lucilla Spini** noted that the FAO Coastal Panel of GTOS will need to review the task description and provide comments to the task lead, as for other tasks concerning the FAO.

Decision STRP13-19: The STRP accepted the plans by the Working Group 1 task force on mapping and delineation, taking account of further review by the IWMI and FAO participants in the task force, to be included in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee.

210. **Max Finlayson** noted that **task 49** on a hydro-geomorphically-based system of wetland classification is a lower priority task which as presently scoped carries significant cost implications. He indicated that further thought will be given to that task. Concerning **task 50** on a wetland inventory metadata base, he noted that GlobWetland has already progressed in this work and it is only necessary to assess that work and post an appraisal on the Support Service. **Doug Taylor** noted that that will give the STRP something to test this triennium on this matter.

Decision STRP13-20: The STRP requested Max Finlayson and Doug Taylor to provide an assessment of the GlobWetland's metadatabase in respect to task 50 and post their conclusions on the Support Service prior to the midterm workshops.

211. **David Stroud** presented the task force pro forma for **task 62** on responding to avian flu and also indicated that he is providing the text of a statement for the STRP to agree upon. He stated that he will provide regular news updates for the Ramsar Web site.
212. **Sergey Dereliev (CMS and AEWa)** indicated that the CMS-based Web site on avian flu requires funding support, which members of the Avian Flu Task Force are providing, and he requested that Ramsar considered contributing to that as well. **The DSG** promised to discuss that possibility with the SG.

Decision STRP13-21: The Panel endorsed the proposed work on responding to avian flu for inclusion in the Work Plan to be proposed to the Standing Committee, and it adopted the statement on highly pathogenic avian influenza included as Annex 2 of the meeting's report.

Decision STRP13-22: The STRP recommended to the Standing Committee that the Ramsar Convention make a financial contribution, along with other members of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Flu, to the development and maintenance of the CMS-based Web site on avian flu, as a matter of priority.

Decision STRP13-23: The STRP requested the Secretariat to send a strong message by the diplomatic channel to the country that has engaged in mass lethal measures in response to avian flu, and asked David Stroud to draft a text of the message for the Secretariat's use.

213. Concerning the issue of wetlands and human health, **task 163**, **the DSG** promised that the co-leads, the Chair and himself, will post a pro forma on the Support Service for review, but indicated that it would follow along the lines of the earlier discussion of the issue, which he described. A review would be prepared in time for the midterm workshops and at that time it would be decided whether a draft Resolution should be proposed for COP10.

Decision STRP13-24: The STRP approved of the task force's proposed approach to task 163 on wetlands and human health, to be recommended to the Standing Committee for inclusion in the STRP Work Plan.

214. **George Lukacs** introduced the planned activities for **task 150** on guidelines on agriculture and wetlands, proposing a series of discussion papers and a consolidated report. He said that the task had been broken down into four key sectors and one crosscutting issue. **Max Finlayson** noted that the mandated task is to provide guidance for the Parties and that the proposed work is intended to provide the needed material for such guidance – it will later be decided whether that is sufficient material with which to begin work on the guidance itself.
215. **The DSG** noted that the task would need a preamble in the Work Plan to explain to the SC that what is proposed is the necessary pre-cursor work and that the development of the guidelines is still some way off. He and **Rebecca Tharme** noted possible sources of funding support for this work, including the government of the Netherlands and an FAO/Wageningen University project. **Max Finlayson** noted that the STRP task would be nested within a bigger project, which hopefully would have its own funding. **Rebecca Tharme** noted that a framework for the guidelines should be possible sooner than the end of the triennium. **Max Finlayson** agreed to amend the pro forma to include the comments above.

Decision STRP13-25: The STRP agreed to recommend to the SC that the development of the discussion papers and consolidated report on wetlands and agriculture (task 150) should be raised to an immediate priority, to request the Secretariat to explore the possibility of co-funding the work with the government of the Netherlands, and to inform the Standing Committee that it is unlikely that the requested guidelines will be completed this triennium.

216. **The Chair** reported that Archana Chatterjee has learned from Jamie Pittock, head of the WWF Global Freshwater Programme, that WWF will volunteer to take forward the review called for in **task 20** on tools and approaches for cross-biome planning and wetland management, in the context of its trials of the Mountains to the Sea guidelines. The Chair asked for a short progress report on that for the midterm workshop.
217. Concerning issues arising from Resolution VIII.45 and ongoing functions of the STRP, **the Chair** noted that **tasks 3 and 5** probably need to be revised and the order reversed. She observed that task 5 on the review of existing Ramsar guidance will be a high priority in the CEPA Programme and urged close cooperation between the CEPA work and Dave Pritchard's work on the possible consolidation of Resolutions. **The DSG** suggested a recommendation to raise task 5 to immediate priority and reduce task 3 to a high priority, and he said that the scope of task 3 will emerge as work on task 5 proceeds.
218. **The Chair** proposed, in fulfillment of **task 161** on additional sector-based issues, to write up a framework for dealing with sector-based issues based upon the model of the DSG's approach to the human health task.

Decision STRP13-26: The STRP agreed to recommend that the priorities of tasks 3 and 5 be reversed and endorsed the approach outlined by the task force on Resolution VIII.45 and ongoing issues.

219. **Christine Prietto** reviewed the priority tasks that Working Group 8 on CEPA and the volunteers from the WI CEPA Specialist Group could usefully assist with. In general, it was proposed that the group could advise on audience targets for STRP outputs, development of criteria for case study selection, design of the questionnaire and survey-interview process, and awareness-raising for the STRP NFP network.

Decision STRP13-27: The Panel endorsed the approach outlined by Christine Prietto for contributing CEPA input to the specified STRP tasks and asked the task force leads to liaise with her about the progress and needs of their work, especially concerning the development of a questionnaire.

220. **The DSG** explained the background of the work on a wetland managers' field guide and noted that it remains to work with the material that Archana Chatterjee has pulled together and come up with an easy step-by-step guide. He said that further information will be posted to the Support Service soon and that progress will be reported to the midterm workshop.

Decision STRP13-28: The STRP expressed its appreciation to Archana Chatterjee of WWF for her excellent work in pulling together an enormous amount of material, which will make possible the development of a suitable presentation of the wetland managers' field guide.

221. **The DSG** explained that he will compile the proposed Work Plan from the electronic versions of the latest pro-formas from each of the Working Groups and task forces, that it will then be signed off on by the STRP Oversight Committee and the SC Chair, and that it will then be circulated to the SC (ideally by the end of June) for comment and approval. He summed up the costs currently

proposed for the immediate and high priority tasks and indicated that, if the Work Plan and costings are approved by the SC, there is enough present funding to begin all of the immediate priority tasks. He noted that the draft report of the meeting will be posted on the Support Service for the participants' comments and then signed off on by the Chair of the STRP.

222. **The Chair** urged that, in anticipation of approval of the Work Plan, the task leads should begin developing possible TORs and identifying potential consultants for immediate and high priority tasks. Contracts will be issued through the Secretariat.

Agenda item 12: Dates of the midterm workshops

223. **The DSG** reviewed the feasible dates early next year and suggested that late March, following the Geneva Auto Show, would be the optimum time. **The Chair** said that she would carry out consultations on the Support Service on how best to arrange the agenda and what experts will be needed. **The DSG** indicated that he thought that all consultants producing work for the task forces should be present at the midterm workshops.

Decision STRP13-29: The STRP agreed that the last week of March, 26-30 March 2007, would be the best dates for the midterm workshops, subject to the approval of the Oversight Committee.

Agenda item 13: Dates of the next STRP meeting

224. **The DSG** explained that the meeting will need to take place early in 2008 in order to complete and sign off on all the products to be approved by the Standing Committee for submission to COP10.

Agenda item 14: Any other business

225. Concerning the "blue sky" discussion of future strategic ideas, **the DSG** demonstrated the MA's method of showing plausible future changes graphically. There was discussion of the extent to which a science panel such as the STRP, CBD's SBSTTA, and UNCCD's CST can be proactive or reactive to events and emerging issues. **Heather MacKay** noted the applicability of the adaptive management philosophy. **Dave Pritchard** distinguished between focusing on ultimate drivers rather than proximate drivers and between structuring discussions in terms of problems or in terms of opportunities. **Bruce Gray** stressed the importance of the communications message, which has implications for how future guidance should be structured and packaged. **Beatriz Torres** noted that some changes can be helpful and that we are all agreed on the need to mobilize data and knowledge and make it more readily available.
226. **The DSG** suggested that a note of strategic thinking could be put into the Work Plan to put down a marker for following up on these ideas. He proposed to keep discussion going over the Support Service and at the midterm workshops.

Agenda item 15: Close of the meeting

227. **The Chair** thanked the participants for an extraordinarily productive week and urged them not to lose the momentum. She thanked all of the members and IOP representatives, the observers and especially those from fellow conventions, and the invited experts. She thanked all of the Secretariat staff, particularly Mireille Katz, Catherine Loetscher, the regional assistants, and Sebastia Semene, and expressed gratitude to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee for their participation.
228. **Jo Mulongoy (CBD)** noted that it was the first time he has attended an STRP meeting and that he has been amazed at how much has been accomplished. He said that the interaction amongst the

- participants has been great and that the other conventions have been accepted as part of the team. He gave special thanks for the excellent leadership of the Chair and threatened to steal her for the CBD.
229. **Stefan Bohórquez** said that he had learned a lot as an observer and thanked everyone for accepting the observers as an integral part of the group.
 230. **Beatriz Torres (GBIF)** said that it was very refreshing to see such great interaction among representatives of governments, NGOs, and MEAs and felt that the leadership of the Chair was outstanding. She said that GBIF would like to continue to contribute in the future.
 231. **Lucilla Spini (FAO)** thanked everyone very much and expressed pleasure at seeing so many dedicated people. She expressed her gratitude to the Ramsar Secretariat.
 232. **The DSG** offered thanks on behalf of the Secretary General to everyone for the huge amount and time and effort they have put into making the meeting a success. He noted a strong sense of partnership which allowed the group to come together so quickly, a mix of old friends and new friends. He felt that the new STRP *modus operandi* has worked very well and he urged everyone to keep the ball rolling by means of the Support Service. He expressed his thanks to the Secretariat staff, to the IUCN copy centre, and to the IUCN cafeteria staff.
 233. **The Chair** wished to record that the DSG had been the central figure in ensuring excellent preparation and smooth running of the meeting. In addition she offered her thanks to the rapporteur, which was echoed by the meeting participants.
 234. **John Bowleg, Vice-Chair of the SC**, said that he was very encouraged by the linkages that have been made and encouraged the STRP to translate this good work widely.
 235. **Paul Mafabi, Chair of the SC**, said that the meeting has met all of his expectations but noted that much more needs to be done to reach the goal of useful guidance for the Parties, which he felt is now off to a good beginning. He drew special attention to the good discussion in clarifying the role of the STRP NFPs, since they are the ones on the ground. He felt that the presence of CBD, UNCCD, CMS, and CITES throughout the meeting will help move forward the synergies and harmonizations among the MEAs. He looked forward to seeing the outputs that have been planned and promised the SC's continued support for the STRP in its key role. He thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair for their leadership, the Secretariat staff for all of their contributions, and Dwight Peck for keeping the record of the meeting. He wished all of the participants bon voyage. There was a round of applause.
 236. **The Chair** formally closed the meeting.

Annex I

Report of the STRP13 session on regional networking (Agenda item 6)

1. A break-out session on regional networking was convened during the lunch break on Wednesday, 30 May 2006, and the report from the break-out session was presented to the Plenary on Thursday, 1 June 2006.
2. Participants developed suggestions on the profile and Terms of Reference for the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) and proposed a series of measures to enhance regional networking within the Convention. A summary of these is presented below.

A. General issues

3. There is a need for effective cooperation and communication between the Regional Networking Members and other members of the STRP to facilitate input from the NFPs into the work of the STRP. As an example, when Task Leads identify a need for input from Contracting Parties/NFPs, they should communicate this to the Regional Networking Members, so that the regional members are able to facilitate the necessary input.
4. A strong regional network is vital to support the implementation of the Convention. With the creation of the role of Regional Networking Members within the STRP, the Convention has an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen regional networking and to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention at the regional and national levels. It is therefore recommended that this action (which is currently listed under “2006-2011 Other STRP actions” (from Resolution VIII.45) be upgraded in the STRP Work Plan 2006-2011 to the category of “2006-2008 Immediate and High Priority Actions”, and that sufficient resources be made available to support this action during the coming triennium.
5. The process of strengthening regional networking within the Convention is a rolling activity. The suggested approach is to initiate a series of small actions aimed at energizing the network of NFPs, and to build on the successes of these. The commitment and support of all members of the STRP, the Secretariat and the Standing Committee are crucial to the success of this process.

B. Suggestions concerning the profile and characteristics of STRP NFP nominees

6. The profile and characteristics of the STRP NFP nominee should be that:
 - i) The nominee should have sufficient time to commit to his or her role as the NFP.
 - ii) The NFP could be a team / alternates (two or more individuals) or an institution (concern was expressed regarding accountability in this case).
 - iii) The NFP should be free to participate in STRP processes and speak in his or her individual capacity, not necessarily as a representative of the government in his or her country.
 - iv) The NFP does not necessarily have to be affiliated with or working within the ministry that is responsible for Ramsar implementation (or indeed within any ministry) – he or she can be from the academic, NGO or private sector. An essential criterion is the credibility of the nominee amongst his or her government colleagues.
 - v) The NFP should be aware of local capacity and expertise constraints.

- vi) The criteria for selection of STRP members should be applied to the selection of NFPs.

C. Suggestions concerning the Terms of Reference (TOR) for STRP NFPs

7. The STRP National Focal Point TOR should include:

- i) Emphasizing the importance of communication within the country and within the region between STRP NFPs and other Ramsar NFPs (Administrative Authority and the CEPA Focal Points), as well as with NFPs from other conventions or other organizations;
- ii) Clarifying the role of the NFP with respect to the STRP – e.g., NFP can identify other people in their country who have the specialist expertise and experience to participate in a thematic work area. The designated NFP does not have to carry alone all the responsibility for input to STRP processes. A “mini-STRP” at country level to mobilize local capacity in support of the designated NFP could be one option;
- iii) Emphasizing that this is not an honorary position: it is a working position. Some estimate of projected time input should be provided so NFPs are aware of the commitment expected of them;
- iv) Stressing the independence of STRP NFPs, i.e., that they are nominated in their individual expertise and capacity and not as a representative of their country (although it is suspected that not all countries will be willing to allow the NFP to speak or participate in STRP processes in their individual capacity);
- v) Emphasising (even more than in the current TOR) the need for proficiency in English;
- vi) Encouraging NFPs to provide information to the STRP on local initiatives that are relevant to STRP’s work (through the Regional Networking Members?); and
- vii) When participating in local conferences and workshops, NFPs should utilize opportunities to share information about Ramsar with their colleagues and build local networks.

8. Other suggestions regarding the NFP TOR include:

- i) Making the NFP terms of reference more user-friendly, and providing more detail; and
- ii) Requesting NFPs to indicate if they would be willing to mentor other NFPs.

D. Proposed actions to be taken to enhance regional networking (including suggested lead(s) for each action)

9. The Regional Networking Members, Ramsar Secretariat and other members of the STRP should:

- i) Encourage and help to initiate in-country communication between the various Ramsar NFPs, where necessary. **Action: ALL**
- ii) Encourage in-country communication and networking between Ramsar NFPs and those from other conventions. (May need backup, e.g., a formal letter of introduction from Secretariat). **Action: Secretariat (formal letter) & ALL**

- iii) Identify other wetland experts and establish links them and wetland centres so as to get broader national support and input to STRP's work. **Action: Regional networking members, Secretariat & Ramsar regional centres**
- iv) Make NFPs aware that they can also be proactive; ask the STRP, IOPs and Secretariat Senior Regional Advisors for advice and guidance if needed; identify and utilize opportunities for capacity building at country and regional level, as resources allow. **Action: Regional Networking Members & Secretariat**
- v) Provide information on the role and functions of STRP NFPs in the NFP manual and training programme being prepared for NFPs in the Africa region, and seek opportunities to develop similar programmes in the other regions. **Action: Regional Networking Members & Secretariat**
- vi) Improve the visibility of NFPs in STRP communications and exchanges; encourage them to share experiences; frequent communication with STRP via the support service and the regional members will help to build confidence of NFPs to engage with STRP. **Action: ALL**
- vii) Recognizing that the problems and solutions (to NFP networking) differ between regions, encourage the development of suitable approaches to regional networking that reflect regional differences. Adapt mechanisms for engagement and networking to suit each country or region. Be aware of cultural differences. **Action: Regional Networking Members**
- viii) Summarize and report back on STRP discussions to the NFPs. **Action: Regional Networking Members**
- ix) Provide material to explain the roles and connections between all the various Ramsar-related bodies at country and regional level. **Action: Regional Networking Members & Secretariat**
- x) Ensure that the Contracting Parties recognize the role and importance of STRP NFPs, and are aware of the resources needed by STRP NFPs (e.g., access to email, documents etc). **Action: Secretariat**
- xi) Encourage personal communications between STRP regional networking members, NFPs, and Senior Advisors, especially where NFPs are not responding to e-mail or Web-based communications. There may be a need to provide a formal letter from the Secretariat in some cases, to help initiate the communications. **Action: Regional Networking Members & Secretariat**
- xii) Identify and make known the benefits or attractions for the NFPs that would motivate them to participate in STRP and other Convention processes. **Action: ALL**
- xiii) Explore options to set up national fora on the STRP Support Service site, to provide a mechanism that would support NFPs in local networking and sharing of STRP information. **Action: Secretariat & Regional networking members**
- xiv) Identify other in-country experts and link them to regional wetland centres (where these exist) to get broader support for the NFPs. This could also serve to address the English language limitation among the NFPs. **Action: ALL**

10. The following activities were agreed which could be taken immediately to deliver on the actions identified above, as follows (including suggested lead(s) for each action):
- i) Produce a leaflet on the “Role of the STRP” as per the new *modus operandi* (in the three official Ramsar languages). **Action: Philippe Gerbeaux & Chris Prietto**
 - ii) Review the Terms of Reference for the STRP NFPs (as detailed in STRP 13 Agenda Item 6: Working Paper 11) in the light of the discussions during the STRP13 meeting and produce a revised draft for consideration and adoption. **Action: Rebecca D’Cruz**
 - iii) Once the revised Terms of Reference for the STRP NFPs have been adopted, produce a 2-page information sheet on the role and functions of the STRP NFPs for distribution to all Contracting Parties and national Ramsar Focal Points, as well as to IOPs and other Convention Secretariats. **Action: To be identified**
 - iv) Send a formal note from the Ramsar Secretariat to introduce the STRP NFPs, Administrative Authorities and STRP Regional Networking Members to each other and encourage them to communicate regularly. **Action: Secretariat**
 - v) Send a formal note from the Secretariat to the IOPs and other Ramsar partners (e.g., other Convention Secretariats and international/regional partners) to introduce the STRP NFPs and encourage increased communication. **Action: Secretariat**

Annex II

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and its consequences for wetland and waterbird conservation and wise use: developments since COP 9

The STRP reviewed developments related to the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1 that have occurred since Ramsar COP 9 (November 2005). It re-affirmed that Resolution IX.23 remains both a useful and relevant source of advice for Contracting Parties and others in guiding national responses to the emerging situation.

The STRP reaffirmed that:

- “the conclusions of WHO, FAO and OIE that attempts to eliminate HPAI in wild bird populations through lethal responses such as culling are not feasible and may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds” (Resolution IX.23).

The STRP recorded its considerable concern regarding information that indicated that one Contracting Party has adopted formal policies which promote the culling of wild birds and the potential destruction of wetland nesting habitats, counter to decisions taken at COP 9 (Resolution IX.23). The Panel requested the Secretariat to contact that Contracting Party on this matter and to ask the authorities there to reconsider their policy, reminding them, as well as all other Contracting Parties, of the international consensus that exists on this matter and the content of Resolution IX.23.

The Panel also stressed that:

- there is critical need for integrated national approaches that bring together expertise from different sectors, especially those related to agriculture, animal disease, human health and wildlife conservation. National responses which are not integrated are likely to be markedly less successful. The need for ‘joined-up’ planning which involves different parts of governments and other sources of expertise remains central to successful responses to the current spread of this virus;
- national contingency plans should be developed, especially outlining responses that would be undertaken in the event of outbreaks or detection of HPAI H5N1, as an essential element of national preparedness;
- there is a need to establish processes, formal and informal, that would allow the rapid sharing between countries of ‘lessons learnt’ as a result of recent responses to outbreaks of HPAI H5N1. The Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza may be in a position to facilitate such information exchange;
- high biosecurity standards by the poultry industry are the crucial response to risk reduction; and
- extensive and long-term data sets and the networks of experts behind these data sets relating to bird movements and waterbird counts are of particular importance (as recognized by Resolution IX.23, paragraph 10) as an essential information resource that allows exploration of possible scenarios of the current HPAI spread, including identification of areas of higher relative risk along migratory flyways, and their role in helping to inform possible policy responses to outbreaks,

New information sources

The STRP noted several recent sources of data and information that are available online and may assist Contracting Parties in responding to the current situation. These include that:

1. The European Food Safety Authority has recently published a major risk assessment¹ related to the potential spread of HPAI H5N1 to the European Union. The background report summarizes much technical information, including current understanding of the epidemiology of the virus, including viral survival under a range of environmental conditions. It also develops a methodology for identifying wild bird species which are thought to be of higher risk of transmitting HPAI H5N1 (although it is not possible to quantify this risk in absolute terms). This methodology is likely to be applicable beyond the EU. Surveillance for HPAI in the EU has since been targeted at these 26 species, and such a focused approach to surveillance is cost-effective. One of the recommendations from this work is that poultry holdings should not be built in the vicinity of wetlands.
2. The European Commission has recently published guidelines for HPAI surveillance², which contains a range of 'best practice' guidance related to field methodologies and sampling techniques. This guidance is more broadly relevant.
3. CMS and the AEWA convened an international seminar in Nairobi in April 2006. The conclusions and recommendations³ of this meeting are widely relevant, and they summarize priorities for surveillance, early-warning and risk assessments; priority short-term needs; longer-term needs; and priorities for collaboration and communication.

¹ http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/ahaw/ahaw_opinions/1484_en.html

² http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/animal/diseases/controlmeasures/avian/surveillance4_en.pdf

³ http://www.cms.int/avianflu/conclusions_rec_ai_seminar.pdf