

Report and Decisions

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. Opening statements were made by:
 - Musonda Mumba, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands
 - Hugh Robertson, Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
 - Siobhan Fennessy, Vice-Chair of the STRP
 - Jerker Tamelander, Director, Science and Policy of the Convention Secretariat

Agenda item 2: Adoption of provisional agenda and working programme

2. The **STRP Chair** referred to documents STRP22 Doc.2.1 Rev.2, *Provisional agenda*, and STRP22 Doc.2.2 Rev.2, *Working Programme*, for consideration and approval.

Decision STRP25-01: The provisional agenda and revised provisional working programme were adopted.

Agenda item 3: Process and expected outcomes for the week

3. The **STRP Chair** presented the process and expected outcomes of the meeting noting that the main output would be a STRP work plan for the 2023-2025 triennium, for approval by the Standing Committee. He drew attention to paragraph 15 of Resolution XIV.14 which instructs the STRP to develop its work plan for 2023-2025 and submit it to the Secretariat as soon as possible for approval of the Standing Committee, either intersessionally in advance of, or at its 62nd meeting. Noting the importance of early approval of the work plan in order to enable the Panel to start its work, the Chair recommended seeking Standing Committee approval of the work plan intersessionally. In addition, the **STRP Chair** noted other expected outcomes were to develop linkages between STRP members, International Organization Partners (IOPs), STRP observers, National Focal Points and the Secretariat to enhance collaboration and enable global partnerships for delivering the STRP work plan, and to provide a clear understanding of how the STRP work plan supports the Convention and the STRP processes to be applied during 2023-2025.

Agenda item 4: Introductions: brief presentation of STRP members, invited experts and observer representatives

4. As this was the first meeting of the triennium, each participant introduced themselves by providing information on their expertise in relation to the Thematic Work Areas of the Panel.
5. A total of 49 participants attended the meeting, including the 18 Panel members as well as three representatives of IOPs, nine representatives of STRP Observer Organizations, and six Representatives of Contracting Parties, including STRP National Focal Points. Of the total participants, 12 attendees used the online format to join the meeting.

Agenda item 5: Briefing on the Convention

6. The **Secretary General** provided an overview of the Convention and its implementation, including its mission, structure, as well as relevant internal and external processes as context for the work of the STRP. The **Deputy Secretary General** introduced the different bodies of the Convention and their relevance and interlinkages to the Panel.
7. The **STRP Chair** provided an overview of how the STRP works, including its purpose, the different roles within the Panel, its modus operandi, work cycle and timelines.
8. The **Senior Advisors for the Americas, Africa and Asia/Oceania regions**, Maria Rivera, Beom-sik Yoo and Zebedee Njisuh, explained how the work of the STRP interlinks with key activities towards implementation of the Convention including the designation of Wetlands of International Importance which draws on the STRP's guidance on application of Criteria, development of National Wetland Inventories which supports preparation of National Reports, and other guidance prepared by the STRP to support national implementation. The **STRP Chair** noted that Flore Lafaye de Micheaux has recently been appointed as Senior Advisor for Europe, and will be joining the Secretariat in June 2023.
9. The **Scientific and Technical Officer**, Filip Aggestam, briefly presented the STRP induction training developed by the Secretariat, available as a self-paced virtual course hosted at the InforMEA platform. He encouraged all STRP members, observer representatives and STRP national focal points to complete the course in order to fully familiarize themselves with STRP processes and procedures and facilitate effective work. He noted that feedback on the course from participants is welcome.
10. Speaking **on behalf of the six IOPs**, Ms Megan Eldred of **Birdlife International**, explained the role of the IOPs as observers to the STRP, and their perspectives on the Panel's work. Noting the importance of science and evidence for a shared vision for wetland conservation and strengthened implementation of the Convention, she emphasized the need for a more direct relationship between the work of the STRP and COP resolutions. She highlighted the importance of STRP engagement in and input to the development of the Conventions' Fifth Strategic Plan (SP5), as well as in supporting implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), including development of indicators.
11. **Panel members** recognized the importance of engagement with scientific bodies of other Conventions and relevant international processes to enhance collaboration and data sharing, and echoed the need to engage in the development of SP5 as well as in the development of the indicator framework of the GBF, ensuring linkages and keeping reporting focused as well as impactful.

Agenda item 6: STRP work plan for 2023 – 2025

12. The **STRP Vice-Chair** made a presentation on the challenges that the Panel faced in the previous triennium, and the opportunities for improvement in the present triennium. One challenge is the number of priority tasks arising from COP14 and the limited time available this triennium, which can at least partially be overcome by initiating implementation as soon as possible. She emphasized the need for effective communication and coordination. The **Director, Science and Policy** noted that dissemination of outputs and related outreach form part of the Secretariat's work and CEPA activities. The STRP therefore needs to engage closely with the Secretariat as

well as the CEPA Oversight Panel, and to the extent possible the STRP should conceptualize products with outreach in mind.

13. The **STRP Chair** described the process for the development of the work plan, noting that it is focused on the high-priority tasks outlined in [Resolution XIV.14](#) and on the additional requests to the STRP made in several [other COP14 Resolutions](#). The process for drafting would include the establishment of working groups for each Thematic Work Area and the discussion of the tasks in plenary during agenda item 9.
14. The **STRP Vice-Chair** provided an overview of the five Thematic Work Areas (TWA) identified in [Resolution XIV.14](#), the tasks identified under each TWAs, and the additional requests from COP14. She explained that the TWAs were defined based on the urgent needs for the Convention identified by Contracting Parties as well as the TWAs of the previous triennium, including ongoing activities to be continued and completed in the current triennium.
15. The **Director, Science and Policy** provided an overview of other international processes and their relevance to the work of the STRP for the 2023-2025 triennium. He drew attention to Resolution XIV.6 [Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions](#) and noted that the work of the Panel is immediately relevant to leveraging the Convention in achieving global biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development goals, in relation to implementation of the global water agenda and in relation to achieving land degradation neutrality. Some aspects of the Panel's work may be pursued in liaison or collaboration with IPCC and IPBES. He also noted that the Panel has a role in identifying and providing advice on emerging issues, such as plastic pollution and wetlands.
16. The **Scientific and Technical Officer** presented the main outcomes of COP14 that relate to the work of the Panel, briefing the attendees on Resolution XIV.14, the [STRP Chair's report to COP14](#), and the other requests from COP that were included under Thematic Work Areas.

Agenda item 7: Working group sessions

17. The **Scientific and Technical Officer** introduced the work plan template developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the STRP Chair, and noted that Panel members should utilize this template during the working group discussions. The **STRP Vice-Chair** presented the template for creating terms of reference for specific tasks.
18. The **STRP Chair** noted that the main objective of the Thematic Area Working groups would be to define tasks further, including specifying products and other outputs to be delivered, and intended target groups or end users, describing the process by which tasks would be implemented, and identifying associated costs e.g., in terms of workshops or work that may require subcontracting. Noting that all activities in the draft work plan are identified in COP14 Resolutions and therefore of high priority, he also requested groups to consider the relative priority of tasks within each Thematic Work Area. He further invited working groups, if time allowed, to start developing the initial scope of the terms of reference of individual tasks.
19. The **Director, Science and Policy** emphasized the need to be clear on the role of the STRP and the purpose of its outputs. He also noted that Panel members should be mindful of work conducted and products delivered by the Panel in previous triennia, build on that knowledge and address specific needs and gaps.

20. Thematic Working Area groups were led by Mr **Lammert Hilarides** (TWA1), Dr **Laurent Durieux** (TWA2), Prof. **Siobhan Fennessy** and Prof. **Anne van Dam** (TWA3), Dr **Ritesh Kumar** (TWA4) and Dr **Hugh Robertson** and Prof. **Sevandi Jayakody** (TWA5). Groups worked concurrently, but participants had the opportunity to contribute to multiple groups. Virtual attendees were invited to provide input to group discussions through email as well as during plenary discussions. Discussions in working groups further elaborated and defined tasks in the work plan including by identifying task leads, describing the scope of tasks, specifying outputs, and identifying costs. The outcomes of the discussions of working group sessions are reflected in the draft STRP work plan 2023-2025. A brief summary of discussions in each TWA working group is provided below:

i. **TWA1: Wetlands of International Importance, development of the Site network and application of criteria.**

The group, led by Mr **Lammert Hilarides**, discussed the high priority tasks on: Further guidance on application of criterion 9 for designating Wetlands of International Importance (Task 1.1a); Guidance on application of criterion 6 (Task 1.1b); a technical proposal for resourcing Waterbird Population Estimates updates (Task 1.1c); and Global assessment of gaps in the network of Wetlands of International Importance, and synergies with global climate and biodiversity goals (1.2).

ii. **TWA 2: Tools for wetland assessment, mapping and monitoring, and development of inventories.**

This Thematic Work Area, led by Dr **Laurent Durieux**, covered two tasks, on wetland mapping and inventories (Task 2.1) and inventories and monitoring of small wetlands (Task 2.2).

iii. **TWA 3: Direct and climate-change-related pressures on wetlands, their impacts and responses.**

The group, led by Prof. **Siobhan Fennessy** and Prof. **Anne van Dam**, discussed high priority tasks related to the synthesis of technical information on the current and projected impact of climate change pressures on wetlands, using the GWO Special Edition (2021) as a starting point and synthesizing wetland information from the IPCC 6th Assessment Report and other relevant global reports (Task 3.1). The group also discussed blue carbon and its integration into climate change planning frameworks (Task 3.2), guidelines to maintain and restore wetlands in agricultural landscapes (Task 3.3), and a presentation of case studies of nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches (Task 3.4).

iv. **TWA 4: Wise use, sustainable management and restoration of wetlands in the wider landscape/seascape.**

TWA lead, Dr **Ritesh Kumar**, facilitated the discussion on the three high priority tasks: OECMs (“Other effective area-based conservation measures”) as an opportunity in promoting wetland conservation and wise use (Task 4.1); Integrating wetland protection, conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management into national sustainable development strategies (Task 4.3); and Developing guidance on the conservation, wise use and management of “working coastal habitats”, including a synthesis of the global pressures on coastal wetlands (Task 4.2).

v. **TWA 5: Cross-cutting issues, supporting functions, and synergies with other MEAs.**

The group, led by Dr **Hugh Robertson** and Prof. **Sevandi Jayakody**, discussed a series of cross-cutting tasks, including the Global Wetland Outlook. The tasks included: Financial costs of wetland loss and degradation, and investment required to maintain and restore

wetlands (Task 5.1 and proposed GWO Special Issue); Advice and guidance to support global implementation of Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) for wetlands (Task 5.2); Developing an approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks (Task 5.3); and A proposal to evaluate policy and legal frameworks provide for wetland conservation, restoration and use (Task 5.4).

21. The STRP Chair provided a summary of the various ongoing and potential ad-hoc requests for STRP advice and support that also is an important function during the 2023-2025 triennium. In particular, the STRP Chair highlighted the STRP contributions to the Strategic Plan Working Group, CEPA Oversight Panel, Wetland City Accreditation, external processes (e.g. IPBES), and engagement in the development of the monitoring and reporting framework of the Global Biodiversity Framework.
22. The **STRP Chair** invited each TWA lead to present the main outcomes of the discussion within their groups. A consolidated draft work plan was prepared.

Agenda item 8: Organization of the work of the STRP

23. The **Scientific and Technical Officer** presented the draft second edition of the STRP author guidelines prepared by the Secretariat. The purpose of the STRP author guidelines is to support task leads, lead authors and contributors in preparing STRP products, to ensure quality and consistency of all STRP publications; it therefore addresses STRP output types, the roles and responsibilities of authors and production and editorial procedures. The document was shared with the Chair and Vice-Chair for review. The **STRP Chair** invited Panel members to volunteer to review the guidelines, by sending an expression of interest by email to the Scientific and Technical Officer.
24. The **Capacity Building and Policy Support Officer**, Robert Godoy Recasens, introduced the STRP product cycle and publication process. He described steps for preparation and planning, write up, peer review and the roles of the Secretariat in editing, proof reading, translation and publication of outputs. He noted the importance of having a well-defined and structured process to ensure that delivery is timely and that the target audience and intended use of the product is kept in mind throughout the process.
25. A brief presentation of the revamped STRP Workspace and other online tools to support the work of the panel was provided by the **Scientific and Technical Officer**. He outlined the functions of the STRP Workspace, which provides an interface for STRP members, observers and National Focal Points to track progress of tasks, and access to information and documents related to specific tasks. The **STRP Chair** instructed task leads, co-leads and contributors to ensure that, to the extent possible, Google Drive would be used consistently while working on tasks, and that a consistent structure would be set up for each task group to use.
26. The **STRP Chair** delivered a presentation about IOP and STRP observer involvement in the work of the Panel, emphasizing their important role in delivering tasks in the STRP work plan based on their considerable technical and scientific capacity, utilizing their networks for disseminating and communicating STRP outputs, and potential collaboration in resourcing STRP activities. He drew attention to the list of STRP observer organizations contained in Annex 3 of Resolution XIV.14, noted that additional organizations may request to participate in the work of the Panel as observers in line with the modalities for the Panel contained in Resolution XII.5, and welcomed CIFOR's participation in the meeting.

27. The STRP **Vice-Chair** drew attention to para.16 of [Resolution XIV.14](#) which requests the STRP to explore with the Secretariat the value of virtual meetings and other online tools to support the ongoing work of the STRP. She proposed holding bi-annual intersessional meetings online between the annual in-person meetings of the STRP. The aim of these meetings would be to check on progress with task leads and to address potential issues arising during the development of a task. The attendees reacted favourably to the suggestion from the Vice-Chair, but remarked that these do not substitute the annual in-person meetings.

Decision STRP25-02: Informal intersessional virtual meetings of the STRP will be held twice per year, in addition to annual in-person meetings of the STRP.

Decision STRP25-03: The STRP Workspace and Google Docs will be used to ensure STRP members, observers and focal points manage and track delivery of STRP tasks and have access to all relevant information.

Agenda item 9: Adoption of draft work plan

28. The **Director, Science and Policy** provided an overview of the core and non-core sources of funding for implementation of the STRP work plan for the 2023-2025 triennium, including voluntary earmarked contributions made by Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He also noted that some activities in the work plan may be supported under the Convention's partnership agreement with Danone. He further noted that resource mobilization for the work of the Panel was recognized as a priority in Resolution XIV.1. The **STRP Chair** proposed to allocate immediately available funding to the highest priority tasks and noted that involvement of IOPs and observers could help reduce costs. It was noted that, in order to complete the work plan in its entirety, additional funds will be needed.
29. Tasks in the work plan were further prioritized taking into account their potential impact in terms of enhanced implementation of the Convention or leveraging of the Convention in relation to global goals; the importance of timely action, e.g., in terms of supporting or informing processes with defined timelines; and the capacity of the Panel to deliver tasks. The prioritization is reflected in the work plan. Tasks identified as highest priority are proposed to be initiated first.
30. The draft STRP work plan 2023-2025 adopted by the Panel is found at Annex 1 of document SC62 Doc.19 on *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, including draft work plan for 2023-2025*¹. The **STRP Chair** informed the meeting that he will work with the Secretariat to seek intersessional approval of the Standing Committee as soon as possible.
31. The **Vice-Chair** summarized overarching challenges and opportunities identified during the meeting in relation to delivering impactful products and advice to support the effective implementation of the Convention and to progress global goals:
- i. **Wetland data** including mapping and inventory is critical for a broad range of actions, at all levels. Development of National Wetland Inventories is progressing slowly and is spatially uneven. Global wetland inventory is patchy and almost entirely absent for some wetland types. RIS for many Wetlands of International Importance are out of date, and Site boundaries are missing for many Sites. This limits the use of this critical information in

¹ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc62-doc19-report-of-the-chair-of-the-scientific-and-technical-review-panel-including-draft>.

reporting on implementation of the Convention, reporting on SDG indicator 6.6.1, and is an impediment to establishing a baseline for and reporting on wetlands in relation to targets under the GBF.

- ii. **STRP outputs** are relevant in a broad range of contexts, including for other MEAs, but download data implies they do not reach as broad an audience as desired, and information on use is hard to gauge. Further effort with and through the CEPA Oversight Panel may provide an opportunity to improve the outreach of the STRP outputs, and to increase their value in the international context. This could be considered in development of the CEPA Oversight Panel work plan. In addition, it was proposed that communication and dissemination be specifically addressed during inter-sessional meetings of the STRP as well as at STRP26.
- iii. Contributions by **STRP Focal Points** are important in the work of the Panel, and may be particularly important in the conceptualization of tasks to help ensure STRP outputs are relevant to target audiences, and in facilitating dissemination and uptake of products. While some STRP Focal Points participated in STRP25, further and more focused engagement is desirable.
- iv. No output in the STRP work plan is specifically focused on **water management**. The global water agenda and follow-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference merit consideration in the work of the STRP, and it was noted that it will be important to give it a profile in a meaningful manner in relevant outputs.
- v. It would be relevant to increase the involvement, where appropriate, of early career scientists and researchers in the work of the STRP, including as potential contributors to relevant STRP tasks or to provide inputs to working groups through relevant STRP representatives.

Decision STRP25-04: The STRP adopted the work plan 2023-2025 as contained in Annex 1 of document SC62 Doc.19 on *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, including draft work plan for 2023-2025*, recommending intersessional approval by the Standing Committee in order to allow task groups to start their work as soon as possible.

Agenda item 10: Date and venue of the next meeting of the STRP (in-person) and the next intersessional meeting (online)

32. The **STRP Chair** proposed the week of 11 March 2024 for the next in-person meeting of the STRP (STRP26), taking into account the time limitations of this triennium and the need to help move tasks forward. An online intersessional meeting was proposed to be held on 26 September 2023, following the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 11. Any other business

33. It was suggested that in future STRP meetings, lunch time and/or evening time presentations on relevant topics and recent developments could be included to progress the exchange of scientific knowledge within the STRP network.
34. A question was raised regarding the process for seeking support for the work of the STRP from the private sector, taking into account the potential conflicts of interest that could arise. The **STRP Chair** marked it as a future point of discussion.

Agenda item 12: Closing remarks

35. The **Director, Science and Policy** thanked meeting participants for the work done on developing the work plan. He acknowledged the valuable input received from online participants, and noted that the Secretariat will seek to further improve the hybrid setting for future meetings.
36. **Panel members** thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair and TWA Leads for their facilitation of discussions, and expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for effective organization of the meeting and for the time spent to explain the STRP process during the meeting and in the Induction Course.
37. The **Deputy Secretary General** provided closing remarks, congratulating the Panel for the work and completion of the work plan, and noting the importance of the work of the STRP to implementation of the Convention, and contributing to the GBF and other global processes.
38. The **STRP Chair** and **Vice-Chair** thanked TWA Leads for leading the working groups, congratulated the attendees for the hard work and the outcomes of the meeting, noting that the draft work plan provided a strong foundation for progressing work this triennium.
39. The STRP Chair closed the meeting.