

Wetlands: water, life, and culture"
8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002

Ramsar COP8 DOC. 4

Agenda item VIIIb

Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Background

1. Through Resolution VII.2, the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties appointed a 13-member Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to serve in their personal capacity for the 1999-2002 triennium. The composition of the STRP was as follows:

Africa

Dr Aboubacar Awaïss (Republic of Niger)
Mr Geoff Cowan (South Africa)
Dr Harry Chabwela (Zambia)

Asia

Dr Mohammed Rashid Shatanawi (Jordan)
Dr Angel C. Alcala (Phillipines)

Europe

Dr Jan Pokorný (Czech Republic)
Professor Toomas Saat (Estonia)
Dr George Zalidis (Greece)
Dr Peter Maitland (United Kingdom)

Neotropics

Dr Yara Schaeffer Novelli (Brazil)
Dr Jorge Jimenez (Costa Rica, Chairperson)

North America

Dr Arthur Hawkins (USA)
Substitute – Dr Randy Milton (Canada)

Oceania

Dr Max Finlayson (Australia)
Substitute – Ms Bronwen Golder (New Zealand)

2. The membership of the STRP also included representatives of each of the four International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention who have contributed substantively to the work of the Panel:

BirdLife International: Mr John O'Sullivan, Mr David Pritchard
IUCN: Mr Jean-Yves Pirot
Wetlands International: Mr Scott Frazier, Dr Douglas Taylor
WWF: Mr Chris Tydeman, Mr Biksham Gujja

3. Significant contributions to the work of the Panel were also made by representatives of STRP observer organizations invited by COP7, notably from the Society of Wetland Scientists, the International Mire Conservation Group, and International Peat Society, and by a number of other technical experts invited by the STRP to assist them in their work. These experts are recognised in the relevant sections of this report.
4. Other organizations and bodies which contributed to the work of the STRP were the Convention on Biological Diversity's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), the Convention on Migratory Species' Scientific Council, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification' Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Secretariat of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) from Columbia University (USA), the International Association of Limnology (SIL), and the Global Wetlands Economics Network (GWEN).
5. The Panel held three meetings at the seat of the Ramsar Bureau in Gland, Switzerland. At its first meeting (September 1999) the Panel developed a work plan which was later approved by the Standing Committee.
6. The STRP was assigned a very substantial number of tasks arising from the Actions in the Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 and the Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by Ramsar COP7 (May 1999). To progress its work plan the Panel established 12 working groups, which worked through e-mail exchanges and met in half-day or one-day workshops immediately prior to meetings of the Panel. The working groups covered the following topics:
 1. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) – lead: Dr Angel Alcala
 2. The World Commission on Dams – lead: Dr Max Finlayson
 3. Impact Assessment – lead: IUCN
 4. Incentive Measures – lead: Mr Arthur Hawkins
 5. Invasive Species – lead: Dr Max Finlayson
 6. Wetland Inventory – lead: Dr Max Finlayson
 7. Peatlands – co-leads: IMCG, IPS & Wetlands International
 8. Wetland Restoration – co-leads: Dr George Zalidis & SWS
 9. Site Management and the San Jose Record – lead: Mr Arthur Hawkins
 10. Allocations and management of water for maintaining ecological functions – lead: Mr Geoff Cowan
 11. Ecological Character – lead: Dr Max Finlayson
 12. Climate Change and the Ramsar Convention – lead: Dr Max Finlayson
7. The STRP also provided input and advice on a number of other scientific and technical topics, notably concerning the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, guidelines for Ramsar site designation, the Ramsar Sites Database, and the operation of the Montreux Record.

8. The work of the Panel was supported by a generous voluntary contribution from the USA, without which it would not have been possible for the Panel to prepare a number of the substantive guidelines and reports being considered for adoption by COP8.
9. Full details of the STRP's work during the triennium are provided in the Reports of its three meetings. These Reports and the Panel's Work Plan were sent to all Contracting Parties through diplomatic channels and are also available on the Ramsar Web site. Therefore this report presents only a summary of the Panel's main areas of work and their recommendations and outputs.
10. Despite the major limitations of its capacity and *modus operandi* during the current triennium to undertake such a considerable amount of work (see section 2. below), the Panel, with substantial support of the Ramsar Bureau, and in particular of the Deputy Secretary General, acting as focal point for the STRP in the Bureau, managed to complete a large proportion of the tasks initially assigned to it. Most of the guidelines and draft Resolutions it prepared were approved by the Standing Committee for consideration by COP8 and will be presented in the COP8 Technical Sessions.

Review of the *modus operandi* of the STRP

11. The Chair and members of the STRP identified a number of major issues concerning the *modus operandi* of the Panel in relation to the increasing number and scope of the tasks assigned to it and the high turnover of its membership, issues which the Chair raised in his report to the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee in 2000. In response to this, the Committee established a Subgroup on the STRP to study the method of STRP selection and kinds of expertise sought for it, as well as the resource implications for the STRP and the Bureau caused by its work load and by the need for coordinating interactions with the STRP National Focal Points.
12. The Standing Committee's review recognised the critical importance of the work of the STRP to the progress of the Convention, and it has led to the submission by the Standing Committee for consideration by COP8 of a substantially revised *modus operandi* for the STRP (see COP8 – DR 29) which addresses these issues. This stresses the need to significantly increase the capacity and continuity of the Panel to undertake its work, as well as the capacity of the Bureau to support it.
13. The proposals concerning the STRP to be considered by COP8 also include the establishment of an STRP Support Service to be provided by Wetlands International, and to be funded from the proposed core Convention budget (see COP8 – DR 29 *bis* and COP8 DOC. 14). If adopted by COP8, this will provide increased capacity to manage the work of the Panel and ensure that it has improved access to global experts on topics in its work plan.
14. However, it should be acknowledged that the resources proposed to be available from the core budget for STRP work for the next triennium do not cover the costs of preparation of substantive guidance by invited experts, as is envisaged by the proposed revised *modus operandi* of the STRP.
15. A large amount of work of preparation of major reports and guidance is proposed for the STRP in the draft Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and draft COP8 Resolutions, as has been

indicated to Contracting Parties in the call for nominations for members of the STRP for the coming triennium. If the COP assigns the Panel this work in the next triennium, significant additional resources will be needed if the Panel is to deliver fully the work requested of it. Therefore, it is very important that the COP and Standing Committee also identify clearly to the STRP the priorities for its work should insufficient resources and capacity be available, and they should ensure that appropriate expertise is available amongst the appointed members for the Panel to undertake its work.

Progress with National STRP Focal Points

16. COP7 requested the STRP to establish and maintain contact with the STRP National Focal Points appointed by Contracting Parties within their respective Ramsar regions, to seek their advice and input as required (Resolution VII.2).
17. To facilitate contact with National Focal Points, the STRP requested the Bureau to establish an e-mail 'listserve' discussion group for STRP National Focal Points.
18. A number of STRP's draft guidances and reports were circulated for comment to National Focal Points using this listserve, and some comments received which were incorporated by the Panel and its Working Groups into their final draft papers.
19. The Panel has recognised the need to engage National Focal Points more fully in providing information and expertise throughout the STRP process of preparing documents, but has also found that during the 1999-2002 triennium its, and the Bureau's, capacity to do so has been limited. The proposed STRP Support Service (COP8 DOC. 14) includes actions to improve this situation.
20. The National Focal Point network has been developing during the triennium, since the COP7 invitation to Contracting Parties to nominate such focal points. As at 10 September 2001, 97 Contracting Parties (73% of Parties) had nominated STRP National Focal Points. The list of STRP National Focal Points is available in the Ramsar web site.

Major outputs of the STRP work

Working Group on Allocations and Management of Water for Maintaining Ecological Functions

21. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Review the current state of knowledge in the area of allocation and management of water to maintain wetland ecosystem functions, and report to COP8 on the findings, and if possible provide guidance for Contracting Parties on this subject (Resolution VII.18). Members of the WG were G. Cowan (lead), M. Acreman (invited expert), T. Hawkins, J. Pokorný, G. Zalidis, BirdLife International, IPS, IUCN, SIL, WWF, and GWEN.
22. The outputs of the WG are contained in COP8 documents COP8 – DR 1 and COP8 DOC. 9. These documents were drafted by invited experts Heather MacKay (South Africa) and Mike Acreman (UK) and STRP member Geoff Cowan.
23. During its work, the Working Group recognised the relatively poor level of knowledge of the relationship between wetlands and groundwater, and have recommended that the STRP should undertake further work to review and prepare guidelines for Contracting

Parties, as appropriate, on the role of wetlands in groundwater recharge and storage and of groundwater in maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, and on the impacts of groundwater abstraction on wetlands.

Working Group on the Report of the World Commission on Dams

24. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Subject to availability of budgetary resources, follow and participate actively in the programme of the World Commission on Dams (WCD), provide input on themes of relevance to Contracting Parties, and report back to COP8 concerning the findings of WCD and their implications for the future (Resolution VII.18).
25. Members of the WG were: M. Finlayson (lead), H. Chabwela, P. Maitland, J. Pokorný, CBD Secretariat, CIESIN, IUCN, SIL, SWS, Wetlands International, and WWF. WCD Secretariat staff member Jamie Skinner and the CBD Secretariat provided support to the WG.
26. The output of its work is contained in COP8 documents COP8 – DR 2 and COP8 DOC. 10.
27. In addition, the WG reviewed and provided input to IUCN's thematic report on Dams and Freshwater Biodiversity (one of a number of comprehensive thematic reports prepared for the WCD).
28. The STRP has recommended that further work should be undertaken on the relationship between dams and wetlands, including review of the ecological roles of artificial dams and reservoirs including their use by waterbirds; guidance on the identification and designation of such wetlands as Ramsar sites; a report on environmental flow methodologies, to assist in management of dam-related impacts; and guidelines for assessing impacts of dams on wetland and river systems.

Working Group on Climate Change and Wetlands

29. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Prepare for consideration at COP8 a comprehensive review of the potential impacts of climate change on wetlands and the roles that wetlands can potentially play in mitigating the effects of climate change and sea level rise (Action 5.1.6 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002).
30. Members of the WG were: M. Finlayson (lead), H. Gitay (invited expert), R. Milton, IPS, IUCN, and WWF.
31. The outputs of its work are contained in COP8 documents COP8 – DR 3 and COP8 DOC. 11. This Information Paper was drafted by Rick van Dam, as invited expert, and Max Finalson of the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (ERISS), Australia, and Habiba Gitay (Australian National University), a lead author on wetlands in IPCC's TAR, also as an STRP invited expert.
32. In addition, the WG reviewed draft regional and other chapters of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Third Assessment Report (TAR) and provided a digest of comments on its coverage concerning wetlands for transmittal to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

33. The STRP has recommended that certain issues concerning climate change and wetlands would benefit from further work by the STRP, notably the role of wetlands in facilitating climate change adaptation and guidance on vulnerability assessment methods (including indicators) of wetlands to climate change and sea level rise.

Working Group on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

34. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Develop guidelines for integrating wetlands into coastal zone planning and management for consideration by COP8 (Action 2.2.1 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002).
35. Members of the WG were: A. Alcalá (lead), J. Cortes (invited expert), M. Finlayson, T. Saat, I. Trumbic (invited expert), Y. Schaeffer-Novelli, International Society of Limnologists (SIL), and WWF.
36. The outputs of its work are contained in COP8 documents: COP8 – DR 4 and COP8 – DR 11. Invited expert Ivica Trumbic (UNEP Protected Areas Programme – Regional Activity Centre, Croatia) prepared a draft of *Principles and Guidelines for integrating wetlands into ICZM*. The final draft Resolution and annexed was prepared by the Bureau with input from Working Group members.
37. The Working Group also prepared draft guidelines for the identification and designation of coral reef and mangroves as Wetlands of International Importance, in implementation of Action 6.2.3 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002, and a edited version of these has been incorporated by the Bureau into COP8 – DR 11, which provides additional guidance for designation of these wetland types, peatlands and wet grasslands.

Working Group on Wetland Inventory

38. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** In collaboration with Wetlands International, the Ramsar Bureau, and other interested organizations, review and further develop existing models for wetland inventory and data management, including the use of remote sensing and low-cost and user-friendly geographic information systems, and report the findings to COP8 with a view to promoting international common standards (Resolution VII.20).
39. Members of the WG were: M. Finlayson (lead), Wetlands International, G. Cowan, J. Jimenez, R. Milton, G. Zalidis, CIESIN, IMCG, IPS, and L. Costa (MedWet invited expert).
40. The output of its work is contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 6.
41. The Panel also endorsed an outline Terms of Reference developed by the Working Group for the Global Review of Wetland Resources, Part 2 (GRoWI 2), which is intended to take forwards parts of Resolution VII.20 concerning reporting to the COP on the state of national wetland inventory and knowledge of the global wetland resource, and it has recommended that this work be undertaken, subject to resourcing, for reporting to COP9.
42. Members of the Working Group were able to take forward during this triennium one element of the GRoWI 2 Terms of Reference, concerning the development of a standard wetland inventory metadata record and database, thanks to a voluntary contribution from

the United Kingdom. This guidance on creating a standard metadata record was prepared by John Lowry and Max Finlayson of ERISS, Australia.

43. The STRP has recommended that further work should be undertaken, and reported to COP9, on the use of remote sensing data, low-cost GIS, and classification systems in wetland inventory.

Working Group on Ecological Quality, Assessment Methodologies and Early Warning Systems

44. Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.

- i) In collaboration with appropriate international bodies, compile and spread reliable criteria and methods for the evaluation of the ecological quality of wetlands through the establishment of indicative biological, physical and chemical parameters (Resolution VII.25);
 - ii) Compile, with information supplied by Contracting Parties and from other relevant sources, a report outlining cases where early warning systems for wetlands are in place or being established, and of the experience gained in maintaining these systems (Resolution VII.10); and
 - iii) Compile information on functional and biodiversity assessment methodologies and the means for their integration for wetland management, for dissemination to Contracting Parties, for their adaptation to local situations (Annex to Resolution VII.18).
45. Members of the WG were: M. Finlayson (lead), G. Cowan, G. Zalidis, BirdLife International, and Wetlands International.
 46. The outputs of its work are contained in COP8 documents: COP8 – DR 7; COP8 – DR 8; COP8 DOC. 16; and COP8 DOC. 20.
 47. Concerning the first task indicated above, the Panel decided to await the development by the Convention on Biological Diversity of advice on indicators of biological diversity, so as to assess their applicability to wetlands. In the event, CBD work was deferred until after the Panel had completed its work for the triennium, and the Panel has recommended that such assessment be undertaken in the 2003-2005 triennium. Likewise, concerning the third task, the Panel decided to provide input, as appropriate, to the preparation of guidance on rapid assessment methodologies for inland water biodiversity, being developed during 2002 under the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan.

Working Group on Impact Assessment

48. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Working in cooperation with counterparts from the CBD and other relevant conventions and expert organizations, review existing guidelines and available information on environmental impact assessment and economic valuation of wetlands. This could be reported as an Internet-based resource kit examining the use of environmental impact assessment and economic valuation as tools for identifying opportunities to apply the wise use principle (Resolution VII.16; and Action 2.4.4 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002).

49. Members of the WG were: IUCN (lead), G. Cowan, Y. Schaeffer-Novelli, BirdLife International, SIL, GWEN, J. Treweek (International Association for Impact Assessment, invited expert).
50. The output of its work is contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 9. Ramsar context annotations were prepared by David Pritchard (BirdLife International) for the Working Group.
51. Lack of resources prevented the Working Group from fully undertaking other tasks in its initial work plan, although IUCN have undertaken further development of their “Biodiversity Economics Web site” which links impact assessment, valuation and incentives materials, including those relevant to wetlands. The STRP has recommended that further work on impact assessment is needed, notably concerning advice on strategic environmental assessment, as well as a further review of existing guidelines on impact assessment which takes into account CBD’s COP6 guidance on impact assessment in relation to sacred and indigenous and local communities’ lands.

Working Group on Incentive Measures

52. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.**
 - i) Work in cooperation with the relevant bodies of the CBD and the Convention on Migratory Species, OECD, the International Association for Impact Assessment, and IUCN, and with the Contracting Parties and other relevant organizations, to a) review existing guidelines and available information on incentive measures in order to prepare an Internet-base resource kit, including a catalogue of incentives and case studies, and b) explore the use of impact assessments as tools for identifying opportunities for implementing incentive measures (Resolution VII.15); and
 - ii) With the Bureau, prepare a report for Ramsar COP8 on progress in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of incentive measures and the identification and removal of perverse incentives, containing recommendations for specific actions to be taken by the Contracting Parties, governments, and other relevant organizations, as human and financial resources allow (Resolution VII.15).
53. Members of the WG were: T. Hawkins (lead), IUCN, J. Pokorný, CIESIN and GWEN.
54. The output of its work is contained in COP8 documents: COP8 – DR 23. Lack of resources prevented the Working Group from undertaking its initially planned major tasks as outlined above.

Working Group on Invasive Alien Species

55. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.**
 - i) Prepare wetland-specific guidelines for identifying, establishing priorities for action, and managing alien species which potentially pose a threat to wetlands and wetland species, in cooperation with the SBSTIA of CBD, SCOPE’s GISP, and other programmes established under international conventions, and taking account of

IUCN's draft *Guidelines for the Prevention of biological Diversity Loss due to Biological Invasion*; and

- ii) Consult with relevant parties to prepare, for the benefit of the Contracting Parties, guidance on legislation or other best practice management approaches that incorporate 'risk assessment', in order to minimise the introduction of new and environmentally dangerous alien species into a jurisdiction and the movement or trade of such species within a jurisdiction (Resolution VII.14);
56. Members of the WG were: M. Finlayson (lead), A. Alcalá, A. Awaïss, H. Chabwela, G. Cowan, P. Maitland, J. Pokorný, T. Saat, IUCN, and WWF.
 57. The outputs of its work are contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 18.
 58. The Working Group reviewed the IUCN Guidelines and CBD's Interim Guiding Principles and concluded that as these were generic guidance on invasive alien species they were appropriate for Ramsar to use in relation to wetland species. The Panel subsequently concluded that the CBD's Guiding Principles, subject to their finalisation and adoption by CBD COP6, were fully applicable to wetland invasive alien species, and thus it recommended that they be considered by COP8 for adoption, so as to ensure that guidance to countries on invasive alien species through the two Conventions would be harmonised, in line with the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan and Ramsar Resolution VII.14.
 59. However, STRP9 also considered that wetland-specific guidance on invasive alien species should be prepared for COP8 and requested the Bureau to find a mechanism for adapting emerging guidelines on invasive species to wetland-specific guidance. The Panel subsequently agreed the Bureau's proposal that, rather than produce separate guidelines for Ramsar Contracting Parties alongside the materials being prepared for CBD Parties, guidance should be prepared for Ramsar Parties which should provide a 'guide' to the use of each of the elements of the comprehensive materials (including legislative frameworks, a good practice toolkit including risk assessment, and global strategies) being produced by the Global Invasive Species Programme and the CBD.
 60. This "Ramsar Guide' to invasive species and wetlands" was drafted for the Panel by IUCN invasive species lead Geoffrey Howard, and approved by the Panel, which completed its work by preparing a draft COP8 Resolution on the topic.
 61. These materials were considered by the Standing Committee's Subgroup on COP8, which decided that only a draft Resolution (COP8 – DR 18), and not the "Ramsar Guide" and CBD Guiding Principles, would be approved for consideration by COP8, owing to concerns by some Parties to both the CBD and the Ramsar Convention over the process of adoption by CBD COP6 of its Guiding Principles.

Working Group on Wetland Restoration

62. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** The Ramsar Bureau, in consultation with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, will identify sources of expertise on specific aspects of wetland restoration and rehabilitation (drawing on established networks such as IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management, DIVERSITAS, Wetlands International's

Wetland Restoration Specialist Group and others), to further develop tools and guidelines, and make this available to the Contracting Parties (Resolution VII.17).

63. Members of the WG were: G. Zalidis & SWS (co-leads), A.. Awaiss, H. Chabwela, G. Cowan, M. Finlayson, J. Pokorný, Y. Schaeffer-Novelli, IPS, IUCN, SIL, Wetlands International, WWF and GWEN.
64. The outputs of its work are contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 16.
65. The Working Group also developed a Wetland Restoration mini-web site, available as part of the Ramsar's Web site (http://www.ramsar.org/strp_rest_index.htm).

Working Group on Peatlands

66. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.**
 - i) With Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs), assist Contracting Parties in evaluating [the Global Action Plan on Peatlands], once completed, with regard to development of:
 - a) additional guidelines for designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites;
 - b) further national and regional sustainable development, wise use and management guidelines for peatlands;
 - c) initiatives to transfer peatland development and restoration technology to developing nations and countries with economies in transition; and
 - d) standardized and globally applicable classification of peatland types and their ecological characteristics. (Recommendation 7.1)
 - ii) Review (Ramsar Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Ramsar Bureau, IPS and IMCG and other interested Partners) the extent and quality of peatland survey around the world and identify those areas in need of further inventory. (Annex to Recommendation 7.1)
67. Members of the WG were IMCG, IPS & Wetlands International (co-leads), R. Milton, WWF, and GWEN.
68. The output of its work is contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 17.
69. The Working Group also prepared draft guidelines for the identification and designation of peatlands as Wetlands of International Importance, in implementation of Action 6.2.3 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002, and an edited version of these has been incorporated by the Bureau into COP8 – DR 11.

Working Group on Site Management Planning and the San José Record

70. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** With support from the Ramsar Bureau, prepare for consideration at COP8 further guidance with respect to management planning, which reviews the latest approaches to environmental, social and economic impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis, zonation, multiple use, design and maintenance of buffer zones, and the application of the precautionary principle (Resolution VII.12).

71. Members of the WG were: T. Hawkins (lead), A. Awaïss, H. Chabwela, IPS, WWF and invited experts F. Alberts (RIZA, Netherlands) and M. Alexander (Countryside Council for Wales, UK).
72. The output of its work is contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 14.
73. The Working Group concluded that the existing Ramsar guidance needed thorough overhauling and updating so as to reflect current good practice and to focus more on the overall management planning process, rather than on preparing a management plan itself.
74. The draft *New guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands* prepared by invited expert Mike Alexander with the Working Group, reflects this approach and is designed to replace the guidance adopted by COP5. The Panel is grateful to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) for its contribution to the guidance on zonation and buffer zones.
75. Two additional elements of guidance have been added to the draft prepared by the Panel in order to make the guidelines more comprehensive. These are a section stressing the importance of setting site-based management planning in its wider land-use planning context, prepared for the Panel by invited expert Mike Acreman, and guidance on the identification of socio-economic and cultural features of sites, prepared by the Bureau.
76. The Panel has recommended that the preparation of further guidance on zonation and monitoring methodologies, including indicators, rapid assessment and the use of remote sensing in management planning, would be appropriate.

Management planning case studies and the San José Record

77. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.**
 - i) Publish for the guidance of Contracting Parties, before the 7th COP (1999), ten best practice case studies of management planning for Ramsar sites, at local, regional and catchment or coastal zone levels (Action 5.2.2 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002); and
 - ii) Assist the Ramsar Bureau to investigate and report to COP8 on the feasibility of the Convention establishing a record (the San José Record) of sites where management plans are being implemented which are models for demonstrating application of the Wise Use Guidelines (Resolution VII.12).
78. The output of the WG on this issue is contained in COP8 document COP8 – DR 15.
79. The Panel considered that any additional best practice case studies to those published in the toolkit of Wise Use Handbooks would be best compiled through the process of implementing the San José Record.

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) and its explanatory notes and guidelines

80. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Assess the data currently available in the [Ramsar Sites Database] and identify any gaps in the data provided by Contracting Parties (Action 5.4.1 of the Convention's Work Plan 2000-2002).
81. During its discussions reviewing existing guidance on ecological character, the Panel's Working Group on this topic, with the advice of Wetlands International, which manages the Ramsar Sites Database on behalf of the Convention, and the Bureau, recommended that certain modifications to the RIS and its explanatory notes would assist Contracting Parties in their identification and designation of Ramsar Sites and their completion of the RIS.
82. The output of this work is contained in COP8 documents COP8 – DR 13.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

83. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** None: STRP advice on the MA has been agreed as an emerging issue for the Panel during the triennium. Information on the MA is contained in document COP8 DOC. 8.
84. An *ad hoc* STRP working group produced guidance on which key issues should be included in the design of the MA so as to meet Ramsar's needs. The MA Secretariat and the MA Technical Design workshop found that this initial analysis proved invaluable in guiding the design of the assessment in relation to the needs of the Convention as a key user.
85. The Panel reviewed and advised on an MA analysis of key questions to be addressed, in relation to Ramsar COP Resolutions. The STRP also appointed two "MA focal Points" for the Panel – Max Finlayson (Oceania) and Doug Taylor (Wetlands International) – to provide further input to, and review of, the MA's work and products. The Focal Points, with the Bureau, participated in MA Design workshops, and Max Finlayson is acting as a lead author for wetlands for the MA's Condition and Trends Working Group.

Operation of the Montreux Record

86. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Seek the advice of the STRP concerning requests from Contracting Parties for the addition and removal of Ramsar Sites on the Montreux Record (Resolution VI.1 and Resolution VII.2).
87. The Panel determined that the STRP should be notified of each request for removal from the Montreux Record (as prescribed by Resolution VI.1), at which time it would select a subgroup, including the appropriate subregional representative and other STRP members and National STRP Focal Points as appropriate, to review each removal process.
88. Members of the Panel advised on three requests for removal of Ramsar Sites from the Record: Nariva Swamp (Trinidad & Tobago), Novozámecky/Brehynsky fishponds (Czech Republic) and Wattenmeer, Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer & Dollart (Germany). In addition, Panel members participated in two Ramsar Advisory Missions, to Chilika Lake, India (Max Finlayson) and to Mühlenberger Loch, Germany (David Pritchard).
89. In the light of its work in advising on Montreux Record removal requests, the Panel indicated that the summary material provided by a Contracting Party may be insufficient to evaluate fully the removal request. Therefore the Panel requested the Bureau to modify its

consultation procedure, such that a request for removal should be accompanied by a short briefing note circulated to all Panel members and observers, and to all STRP National Focal Points, through the two STRP list serves, together with a list of available supporting documents and their size. Those willing to review the request would then respond, identifying which of the available materials they wish to receive to make their review.

Strengthening links with counterpart bodies of related Conventions

90. **Tasks given to the STRP by COP7.** Resolution VII.2 invites the following bodies and organizations to participate as observers in the meetings of the STRP and to consider establishing close working cooperative arrangements on matters of common interest:
- The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice [SBSTTA] of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 - The Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
 - The Committee on Science and Technology [CST] of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
91. In addition, through the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan (see COP8 DOC. 19) and the Programme of Joint Work between Ramsar and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (COP8 DOC. 22), the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of these organizations are invited to participate in each other's meetings.
92. The Chair of CBD's SBSTTA and representatives of the Secretariats of CBD, CMS, UNCCD and the Man and the Biosphere Programme participated in STRP meetings and contributed to the Panel's work.
93. The STRP's Chair and its member for Oceania (Max Finlayson) participated in CBD SBSTTA meetings during the triennium and contributed to the work of that body.

The Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008

94. The Chair of STRP, and David Pritchard (BirdLife International) deputising for the Chair, contributed to the drafting and review of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 through the Standing Committee's Subgroup established for the purpose.

Conclusion

95. The STRP accomplished a significant amount of work during the past triennium. The support from the Bureau staff and the resources provided by the USA proved critical for the delivery of such a large number of products. Weaknesses in the *modus operandi* of this Panel need to be addressed in order to secure an increasing contribution from this group to the work of the Convention. The future composition of the Panel ought to reflect the nature of the tasks assigned by the COP for the next triennium; especially if issues such as socio-economic criteria will be included.
96. As the tasks assigned to this body are only increasing, the Convention will need to seek creative ways to maximize the STRP's productivity. Increasing its relationships with the subsidiary bodies from other MEAs and with existing expert networks in other organizations might prove a cost efficient process to the Convention.

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