



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY

Report of the 6th European Ramsar Meeting Stockholm - Sweden - 3-7 May 2008



Introduction

The Meeting was held on 3-7 May 2008 at the Radisson SAS Royal Park Hotel in Stockholm, Sweden. It was attended by 109 participants, representing 37 Contracting Parties in the European Region, six intergovernmental organisations, three of Ramsar's five International Organisation Partners, seven other organisations, and two invited Ramsar experts.

Ramsar Parties represented were: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. *Apologies were received from:* Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Montenegro and Portugal. *Missing were:* Greece, Monaco, and Poland.

The Meeting was hosted by the **Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)**, the Ramsar Administrative Authority in Sweden. Meeting costs were covered by SEPA and the **Swedish Ministry of the Environment**, with additional contributions by the **Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)**, the **German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety** and the **Hungarian Ministry of Environment and Water**. The **Biosphere Connections** initiative of the **Star Alliance** airlines network provided free flights to Stockholm for 28 delegates. The Ramsar Secretariat is grateful to these institutions, the Swedish Meeting hosts and organizers for their support.

The Meeting programme, annotated agenda, working group programme outlines and other supporting documents, as well as the participants list, are available on the Ramsar Convention website at:

www.ramsar.org/mtg_reg_europe2008_index.htm

Powerpoint files of the presentations delivered during the Meeting can be obtained from the Ramsar Secretariat, on simple demand to Europe@ramsar.org. The remainder of this report provides summaries of the issues presented, the conclusions reached and the recommendations elaborated in the plenary and working group sessions.

Opening Plenary - from Kampala (COP9) to Stockholm

The opening session provided an opportunity to set the scene in terms of Convention implementation progress and challenges in Europe and globally, and for the host country Sweden to describe their approaches to Convention implementation and how wetlands are perceived in the country.

Opening and Welcome

The Director General of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, *Lars-Erik Liljelund*, opened the Meeting and welcomed participants to Sweden and Stockholm. He explained the historical setting of the Meeting venue sited in the world's first National City Park. He drew attention to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, being the oldest established in the world (in 1967), which works largely through county administrative boards which have environmental responsibilities. Sweden has designated 51 Ramsar sites (briefly presented in a leaflet distributed to the participants), the first in 1974, and a National Wetland Inventory was begun in 1981. A significant number of further Ramsar site designations are in preparation. About 25% of Sweden is still wetland after the loss of one-quarter of its wetland ecosystems, largely to agriculture and forestry. Recently, attention to wetland services is proving an important approach to securing their maintenance, such as their roles in flood control, and in reducing eutrophication in coastal waters.

The Ramsar Secretary General, *Tiega Anada*, welcomed participants, recalling that he took office in August 2007, and that this meeting provides an important opportunity to meet Europe's Ramsar national representatives. He recognized Sweden for being amongst the strongest supporters of Ramsar for a long time, both within Sweden, and through its support to developing countries and the Secretariat by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). He warmly thanked the SEPA for their hosting of the meeting, and the Ramsar Secretariat European team for their work in preparing the meeting. He stressed his wish to see an enhanced partnership culture in the Convention, both at global and national level, with Ramsar players taking leadership on cross-sectoral partnerships, and working closely with the Convention's International Organisation Partners (IOPs), enhanced networking, including through regional initiatives, and improved fundraising.

He noted that Contracting Parties (CPs) needed to provide information and advice on when and how to take actions at the right time and place. He recognized Sweden's strong implementation mechanisms including on environmental quality objectives, and appreciated the 2005 strategies for thriving wetlands and on peatlands. In Europe, there are 45 CPs, and over half the world's Ramsar sites, but just two staff in the Secretariat working with Parties. He urged Europe to continue to strengthen its role in the further development of the Convention and drew attention to a number of important initiatives underway in Europe which support delivering the wise use of wetlands.

Thriving wetlands, flourishing lakes and streams – Swedish environmental quality objectives

Ann Wahlström, Ramsar's focal point in the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, described 16 Swedish environmental quality objectives which have been adopted by the Swedish Parliament as a way of achieving sustainability, within a generation, through shared responsibility. For each

of the 16 objectives, interim targets are set, and five objectives include wetland aspects. Two in particular speak to inland wetlands, one being “flourishing lakes and streams”, which has targets including long-term protection and restoration by 2010, and the other being “thriving wetlands”, focusing particularly on mires and wet grasslands, with targets including long-term protection of mires in the mire protection plan and the establishment and restoration of 12,000 ha of wetlands on agricultural land. These environmental quality objectives were needed because of widespread wetland losses, particularly of wet grasslands in southern Sweden, and in northern Sweden from forestry impacts. Some 80% of remaining wetlands are being affected to some extent by human activity. Wise Use is delivered through Sweden’s Environmental Code, which has merged 16 previously separate legislations. Under this Code, a land drainage ban is in place in southern Sweden, with drainage only permitted elsewhere through a strict permit system. There remain a number of wetland challenges including climate change, eutrophication, and forestry practices. A new interim target is now proposed for “consideration of wetlands” to be achieved by 2015.

The Convention in a global context – progress since COP9 and new challenges

Ramsar Secretary General (SG) *Tiega Anada* spoke on the Ramsar Convention in a global context, reflecting on progress since COP9 (Kampala 2005) and ongoing and new challenges for the wise use of wetlands. He outlined the COP10 preparatory processes (STRP, Standing Committee, regional Meetings, and National Reports), and outlined some of the major issues which will be discussed at COP. He explained the assessment of options for the future legal status of the Secretariat with the aim of resolving a number of current operational problems: core budget, cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements, notably CBD, and urged better synergies to be achieved at national level, including with other conventions, such as the role of wetlands in climate change, and with CMS, UNCCD and CITES.

Concerning overall development of the Convention, he urged continued attention to emerging issues, including secretariat staffing and capacity. The SG advised that the STRP is working on many issues related to the COP10 theme of “Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People”. He urged Parties to submit their National Reports, so that a full report on implementation in Europe can be provided to COP10. He reported the need to avoid proliferation of, and competition between, regional initiatives in each region. At national level he stressed the value of national wetland policies, the importance of having a national Ramsar/wetland committee, focusing attention of restoration of lost and degraded wetlands, the importance of management planning and of achieving a comprehensive Ramsar List of all types of wetlands, supported through wetland inventories, and addressing problems on designated Ramsar sites. He also stressed the need to develop a range of innovative partnerships with other sectors and stakeholders.

Implementing the Convention in Europe – are we doing well ?

Tobias Salathe, Ramsar’s Senior Advisor for Europe, reviewed how well European countries are doing in their implementation, looking at how well Europe is achieving the strategic goals. Some 17 COP10 National Reports have not yet been submitted to the Secretariat. Three countries have yet to join the Convention. The 904 Ramsar sites in Europe are coming increasingly under pressure, but although there are at least 70 cases that the Secretariat is aware of, Article 3.2 reporting is not being fully implemented. All COP10 draft Resolutions are now being issued for Standing Committee (SC) 37 consideration. He drew attention to proposals to be further considered by SC37 to change the Convention’s COP cycle to four years. He summarized what the present meeting should aim to achieve, notably to maximize the benefit of coming together at this stage in the COP preparation cycle, to exchange knowledge and know-how and to learn from

each others' experience, to focus on emerging problems and issues, and to look for ways to improve the impact of the Convention, including through partnerships and Ramsar project support capacity. He closed by encouraging participants to start thinking advising the European SC members on views to input to SC37 discussions; and also to start discussion of who will be proposed for European SC membership (four Parties) for the next triennium.

Finally, a slide show was presented to provide a short introduction to the splendour of Swedish National Parks.

Implementing the Convention – Progress and Problems

Ramsar sites – where we stand today, information needs and data management

Monica Zavagli, Ramsar's Assistant Adviser for Europe, presented an overview on the status of Europe's 904 Ramsar sites, making up for 51% of all Ramsar sites worldwide. She recalled the Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the future development of the Ramsar List adopted through Resolution VII.11 in 1999, and regretted the absence of information at the Secretariat on national planning and implementation of this in most European countries, hoping nevertheless that the Parties are actively defining their objectives, long-term targets and guidance for the development of national networks of Ramsar sites. She recalled for the benefit of newcomers in the national Administrative Authorities the process to submit Ramsar site data and maps, and the easy way of updating such information by simply submitting a (partially) revised Ramsar Information Sheet via e-mail to the Secretariat. She stressed that this should be done whenever a change occurs, and that it was preferable not to wait until the six year deadline for updating Ramsar site information. Documents listing the status of information available on European Ramsar sites at the Secretariat, and listing the sites included in the Montreux Record, and those sites where the Secretariat was informed about possible or ongoing ecological change since COP9, in accordance with Article 3.2 of the Convention, were distributed to all participants and are also publicly available on the Meeting website (cf. above). They are intended to remind Parties and provide them with guidance how to submit the needed updates in time before COP10. Finally, she reported that a number of Parties indicated that they are preparing new Ramsar site designations in time for COP10.

Wings over Wetlands – the contribution of the flyways project to Ramsar implementation

Ward Hagemeyer, of Wetlands International, presented the project "Wings over Wetlands" for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their critical wetland habitats, a joint effort between UNEP's Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), two Ramsar International Organization Partners (Wetlands and BirdLife International), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Ramsar Secretariat and a range of donors and local partners along the African-Eurasian Flyways. The project concerns directly about 1 million people living close to critical wetland sites which each support at least 1% of a migratory bird population (Ramsar site criterion 6), out of a total of 300 million waterbirds in 300 species migrating regularly between the two continents. The project compiles information on critical sites, builds local management and monitoring capacities, facilitates cooperation, provides training and enhances communication and networking with support by France's Technical Agency for Natural Areas (ATEN). It set up a number of regional offices to coordinate demonstration projects and to bring together local know-how and expertise (for more cf.

www.wingsoverwetlands.org). How this can best contribute to the implementation of specific Ramsar objectives was discussed in a working group session on the next day.

Towards a European strategy for the development of a Ramsar site network

Michael Steiner, Ramsar's STRP focal point in Austria, argued for the coherent development of a comprehensive and adequate European network of internationally important wetland sites under Ramsar. A strategic approach, not only at national level, implementing the guidance provided in Ramsar Handbook 14 on "Designating Ramsar sites", but also continent-wide, should urgently become an operational target. National STRP focal points could play an important role in advising National Ramsar Committees and Administrative Authorities on sites fulfilling Ramsar listing criteria. First analyses of designation gaps regarding specific wetland types or geographical areas can easily be undertaken using the database of the Ramsar Sites Information Service maintained by Wetlands International under contract with the Ramsar Secretariat. He urged also that European Union project funding should be increasingly directed to existing and potential Ramsar sites.

Wetland ecological character – taking forward this key concept under Ramsar

STRP expert *David Pritchard* introduced the aim and the contents of two documents prepared by STRP for COP10. The first draft Resolution text explains how to describe the ecological character of wetlands, what data to collect to do so, and how to integrate this information into the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS). This document provides a format for reporting on possible or ongoing change in ecological character at specific wetland sites. He recalled that such reporting by the Administrative Authorities, "at the earliest possible time", is required by Article 3.2 of the Convention, stipulating that "information on such changes shall be passed without delay" to the Ramsar Secretariat. The second draft Resolution text puts the issue in a broader framework of processes such as detecting, reporting and responding to change in wetland ecological character. It provides scope for these processes and a risk assessment tool to differentiate between natural *vs* human-induced change, and between likely *vs* actual ecological change. The document includes detailed flowcharts to operationally link the procedural steps and to set up a monitoring system in conjunction with other available Ramsar tools, such as the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Missions.

Priority Issues for Wetlands in Europe

Wetlands and Climate Change – consequences for south European habitats and biodiversity

Sonia Ravera, of the University of Molise in Italy, presented the main findings of the 4th Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change and its consequences on wetland habitats and their biodiversity, illustrated with examples from southern Europe. The changing climate will pose serious threats to specific habitats and species and significantly reduce services provided by wetland ecosystems in all biogeographical regions, essentially through changes in the distribution and amount of water. In Europe, this will affect coastal and inland wetlands, and the greatest impacts of water shortages will be faced in the Mediterranean, while the impacts of a warming climate will be most pronounced in the Arctic. Mitigation efforts should focus on the

importance of wetlands in carbon storage and their possible regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. In the discussion, Meeting participants called for a renewed interest and further efforts of STRP, supported by the Contracting Parties, during the next triennium to work on climate change and to prepare mitigation measures. They welcomed the, soon to be published, STRP Technical Paper on wetland restoration and climate change and invited CPs to comment on the draft text and to support the COP10 draft Resolutions on climate change and wetlands, on wetlands and 'biofuels', and providing consolidated guidance on integrating wetlands into river basin management.

Understanding ecohydrological processes for sustainable floodplain management

Iwona Wagner, of UNESCO's European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology at the University of Lodz in Poland, presented the efforts to integrate ecology and hydrology into a new discipline of applied environmental science, ecohydrology, to better understand the role of biological processes in the hydrological cycle and to underline that ecosystem services are essential to improve the status of global water resources (cf. www.erce.unesco.lodz.pl). She presented work in different demonstration river basins, such as the Pilica river floodplain in central Poland. Ecohydrology is a tool to develop better floodplain management in order to increase biodiversity, water retention (during times of flood and drought), nutrient trapping, fisheries yield and sustainable tourism development. Besides covering experimental ecohydrological work in demonstration river basins, UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP) is also offering education and training for sustainable floodplain management. Convinced by her arguments, the Meeting participants concluded that the trans-disciplinary ecohydrology approach ideally addresses Ramsar's concerns to achieve sustainable land use planning, wetland management and decision making, and is a suitable tool to deal with water hazard mitigation and the restoration and maintenance of evolutionarily established wetland ecosystems. Thus, more ecohydrology experts should get involved in the work of STRP.

Ramsar's contribution to the 2010 biodiversity target – progress and further needs

Andras Krolopp, of the IUCN Countdown 2010 Initiative, reminded the audience that governments worldwide have promised to save biodiversity by the year 2010, and that the Countdown 2010 initiative helps them to move from words to action by joining a network of active partners. The sustainable management of Ramsar sites can make obvious contributions towards the 2010 biodiversity target, as already formally recognized by several European Parties. In addition, the current development of indicators of effectiveness for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention will be of great help when taking stock in late 2010 or soon afterwards, how well the biodiversity target will have been achieved? He suggested that the Ramsar Convention play an active role in the processes to develop specific biodiversity indicators and help to mobilize funding to implement the European Union Biodiversity Communication at regional and national level, and support communication about biodiversity needs beyond the year 2010. He then introduced the TEMATEA project on issue-based modules (www.tematea.org) as a practical tool to implement better different biodiversity-related agreements at national level. TEMATEA structures the multitude of commitments and obligations stemming from regional and global agreements into an issue-based framework and regroups the implementation requirements from different agreements in a practical way.

Water-related ecosystems, their management and services – how to pay for them

Ella Behbyarova, from the Secretariat of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the UNECE “Water Convention”), presented the Recommendations on Payments for Ecosystem Services in Integrated Water Resources Management, prepared with Ramsar input in 2006 and adopted by the Parties to the UNECE Convention, most of them also Parties to Ramsar. UNECE bases its work on water management on an ecosystems approach, arguing that water resources should not be managed in isolation from other ecosystem components, living resources and human needs in the river basin. The Recommendations provide a strategic set of steps to consider when trying to establish and operate innovative financing mechanisms, including specific schemes for Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). This allows internalizing environmental costs and benefits in decision making. PES can generate additional resources where financial support is limited and increase the private sector involvement in environmental protection. The Recommendations on PES are based on good practice and lessons learnt through implementation projects. She encouraged the countries to test and to apply the Recommendations. They are a tool to assist governments, joint bodies and other actors in the UNECE region, and can also be applied, as appropriate, in other regions.

How to Work with Partners and Become More Effective

First assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters

Lea Kauppi, chairperson of the UNECE Water Convention’s Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, presented the first Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters, covering 140 rivers, 30 lakes and 70 aquifers assessed by more than 150 experts. All European countries (except the islands of Cyprus, Malta and Iceland) share water resources with neighbouring countries, providing major sources of income and creating ecological, social and economic interdependencies. Major ecological problems revealed by the assessment are increasing water abstraction for agricultural purposes, creating upstream-downstream conflicts, water eutrophication and pollution by hazardous substances, hydro-morphological alterations of rivers (channelization, dams, reservoirs) and significant drinking water contamination in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, where point source pollution by sewage and industrial effluents is still posing problems. She highlighted the need to develop Integrated Water Resources Management plans for almost all basins, and expressed the wish that wetland ecosystem aspects be more fully included. Already in June 2008, the Working Group will meet again to start the preparations for the second Assessment. She invited Ramsar’s Administrative Authorities to team up with the focal points of the UNECE Water Convention in their country, to make sure that wetland-related information will become an integral part of the second Assessment, possibly covering selected wetland sites.

Managing transboundary Ramsar sites together – how to move on

Gerard Sigmund, head of the Austrian Ramsar Administrative Authority, presented the first experiences of working together in the management of transboundary Ramsar sites shared by two or three countries in Europe. He recalled that Article 5 of the Convention specifically asks for such transboundary cooperation between Ramsar Parties. Despite this, only 5 wetland areas are formally designated as Transboundary Ramsar sites, representing about 10% of all transboundary wetland sites in Europe. He listed the benefits of transboundary work to enhance the

sustainability of site and water management, raising awareness and attracting more funds. Obstacles to an efficient cooperation are lack of capacities and experience, political divergences or conflicts, different languages and different rules applying, notably within and outside of the European Union. He provided practical hints on how to advance in transboundary cooperation, notably by addressing issues of evident shared concern first, such as the coordinated regulation of hunting and fishing, and to use existing transboundary commissions linked to river basins or protected areas (e.g. National or Nature Parks). It is important to agree on common goals and objectives, to define key implementation fields for common work and to harmonize management interventions. Communication between authorities, NGOs and all parts of the civil society is essential. Formal Memoranda of Understanding between the countries implied can set the right frame for the coordinated activities, eventually to be celebrated by the formal designation of a Transboundary Ramsar site area. The subject was then further developed and discussed in a specific working group session.

The role of National Ramsar Committees – why they are needed

Wolfgang Pelikan, chair of the Austrian Ramsar Committee, explained the effective functioning of this Committee, working since 1989 as a national engine for Ramsar implementation. The Committee meets once or twice per year, each time in a different federal state, close to a Ramsar site, which is also visited to share management experiences and to motivate the participants. The Committees actively invites other sectors to participate, such as agricultural and forestry representatives. So far, it has proven more difficult to imply the private sector. The Committee draws up Ramsar site shadow lists, develops national CEPA programmes, coordinates the national wetland inventory, assembles the National Report and assesses threats to Ramsar sites. It is felt that the Committee ideally responds to the need for information exchange, to increase working relationships and to coordinate activities in different fields, such as site management, CEPA and STRP activities. The participation of wetland-related NGOs in the Committee proved to be very productive. Decisions are taken by consensus. The role of National Ramsar Committees was further addressed in a working group session (cf. below).

Working at regional level – is it effective to make Ramsar more visible

Tobias Salathe presented the experiences gained during the first operational years of regional Ramsar initiatives. The first such initiative was MedWet, starting in 1991 to bring together 26 Ramsar Parties and a number of non-governmental members in the Mediterranean region. In Europe three more initiatives started their activities recently, focusing on the Nordic-Baltic, Carpathian and Black Sea regions. With such experiences, also from regions outside Europe, the timing is now appropriate to clarify what regional initiatives should be for, and what they need to be made of? They should not take up the role of the Ramsar Secretariat, nor duplicate its efforts. They need to provide added value to increase the capacity for better implementation of Ramsar on the ground and should act for the benefit, but not on behalf, of the Convention. This is addressed in a set of draft Operational Criteria that COP10 will have the opportunity to adopt. It is intended that regional initiatives provide lasting fora for all relevant regional stakeholders (governmental, international, NGO and private) to coordinate more specific projects (limited in subject, time or geographical focus) and to act as ‘think tanks’ for strategic and forward planning, preparation of regional policies and wetland observatories, and to increase effective cooperation with regional Conventions and other international instruments. Participants in all regional initiatives in Europe had the opportunity to discuss priorities of their future work and development in more detail in three specific working group sessions (cf. below).

Priorities for the Triennium 2009-2011

Future challenges for water ecosystems

Anders Berntell, Executive Director of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), focused his presentation on discussing issues with a common challenge for the European Union and Ramsar, noting the potential for working together. He asked if there is a global water crisis and truly physical scarcity, or if it is only about bad management? 1.2 billion people live without a safe water supply, 2.4 billion lack access to sanitation, and every cubic metre of contaminated waste water discharged into water bodies and water courses spoils up to 8 to 10 cubic metres of pure water. The sanitation challenge is clearly not a water, but a management issue. In terms of water resources however, he presented that there is evidence of a growing scarcity – by 2025 it is predicted that two out of three people will live in water-stressed river basins. Over-consumption of water is a serious issue to be considered at global scale, essentially in the area of food production, to satisfy not just a growing global population but also the higher consumption patterns evident in wealthier populations, including similar trends in many developing countries. Better public awareness of our personal water footprint, is another way forward. Improving our efficiency in agricultural production, both rainfed and irrigated, is key. SIWI (www.siwi.org) advocates integrated water resources management (IWRM) as the most effective way to manage water for ecosystems and that the water needs of ecosystems can and must be built into this management tool. The essential allocation of water for maintaining ecosystems – the environmental flows approach – is currently attempted in many rivers as part of the management planning process, and in rehabilitation programmes. Many helpful tools are available and examples of their use. Finding solutions to water scarcity is an imperative for everyone. The IWRM approach, underpinned by appropriate governance and an ecosystem-based approach should bring SIWI together in a closer working relationship with the Ramsar Convention.

The European Union – a strong Ramsar partner not to be forgotten

Patrick Murphy, from the European Commission's Directorate General Environment, noted a number of areas where the work of the Commission is of great relevance to the Ramsar Convention and where there is opportunity for collaboration. Reminding the audience that the 2010 biodiversity target has to be met in only 20 months from now, the reality is that most countries in Europe will not be able to meet the target, but that none-the-less, there will be some positive stories to tell. Through Natura 2000, he noted the 25 member states now have 25,000 sites totaling 90,000 square kilometers and covering 7 biogeographic regions, and this will be expanded with the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania. He also noted that through the assessment of the 200 habitats and 1000 species covered under the Birds and Habitats Directives a great deal of information of relevance to Ramsar has been amassed for each bioregion for the 25 member states. Many of the individual state reports are already available and the EU-wide analysis and report will be ready by the end of this year. By November the Commission intends to have a package of materials to help members deal with alien invasive species, a serious issue in terms of conserving biodiversity within the EU.

He informed the Meeting that a 50-page report, inspired by the recent "Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change", is being prepared to address the economics of biodiversity loss for the ministerial section of the Convention on Biodiversity's COP9. While he agreed that we should consider both the ethics and morality of biodiversity loss, we need to have a solid economic argument to promote a strong agenda for reducing the loss of biodiversity and there is a role for the Ramsar Convention in the discussion on halting the loss. He noted that the EU is

working on climate change and biodiversity and that a White Paper on this will be produced, and that in collaboration with IUCN, the Red List for reptiles, amphibians, vascular plants, beetles and others is being carried out, and that there is the opportunity for collaboration on this with Ramsar. Answering the question why he did not mention the EU Water Framework Directive, he noted that the more integrated approach to water management through IWRM techniques was key to water management plans.

FAO and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands - synergies towards the challenges posed by the 21st Century

Lucilla Spini, STRP representative from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, recalled that the world is facing old challenges (e.g. attainment of global food security) as well as new challenges (e.g. impact of global environmental change). She noted the important role of wetlands in addressing these challenges through an integrated approach aimed at the conservation and wise use of natural resources, global food security and poverty eradication and illustrated FAO activities and highlighted the synergies between FAO and Ramsar to this end. First, she referred to the cooperation between Ramsar and the Global Terrestrial Observation System (GTOS), a programme for observation, modeling, and analysis of terrestrial ecosystems to support sustainable development. She underlined that this cooperation provided a framework for GTOS input to the work of STRP, where FAO, through the GTOS Coastal Panel (CGTOS), in cooperation with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), called for a partnership to promote and improve wetland mapping inventories for monitoring and assessment in support of the Ramsar Convention and other biodiversity-related conventions. Secondly, the work undertaken under the Guidelines on Agriculture and Wetland Interactions (GAWI) was described with specific reference to the development of the GAWI Framework Document in preparation for COP10, to be published as a FAO Water Report. Thirdly, FAO's role in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds was illustrated as another example of FAO's cooperative activities in support of the Ramsar Convention. In conclusion, she framed these examples within international processes such as the STRP and the preparatory meetings for a "High Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy" (FAO, 3-5 June 2008). And she underlined further the opportunities to strengthen the synergies between FAO and the Convention. The ensuing discussion highlighted other relevant FAO activities, such as the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiative.

The purpose of CEPA tools – enhancing our implantation

Sandra Hails, Ramsar's CEPA Programme Officer, showed that CEPA tools are varied and can be considered along a continuum from simply raising awareness, to providing knowledge and skills, to finally resulting in action and changed behaviour for the benefit of wetlands using the processes of communication, education, training and participation. Using examples largely from within the European region, she presented a diversity of interventions that were intended variously to ensure effective stakeholder dialogue in a variety of situations, develop and maintain networks and partnerships, to exchange essential information, to build capacity, etc. These included interventions such as web sites and animations, manager training courses, publications, and World Wetlands Day activities. Using data from an action planning process, it was emphasized that CEPA interventions will only be effective if key stakeholders have been identified and analysed and then CEPA interventions designed to address the behavioural change required. The Convention's current CEPA Programme expects that actions plan be delivered at an appropriate scale, and it was emphasized that this is necessary to ensure the limited CEPA

resources effectively invested in interventions that will make a difference to wetland wise use. She noted that two tools are available to assist Parties in developing effective CEPA programmes of work: a Ramsar Secretariat tool to assist in the CEPA action planning process is in the final stages of development, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has already made available a CEPA Toolkit to assist in the implementation of CEPA plans. A specific working group session was devoted later in the programme to address the specific needs of CEPA National Focal Points (cf. below).

Closing Session – From Stockholm to Changwon (COP10)

This session provided an opportunity for briefing on a number of the key issues and draft Resolutions which will be considered by the Standing Committee at its 37th meeting in June 2008 for transmittal to COP10.

Draft Resolutions and a new Ramsar Strategic Plan for submission to COP10

Ramsar Deputy Secretary General *Nick Davidson* reported on the achievements of the STRP during the triennium in implementing its ambitious work plan and high priority tasks, and on behalf of the STRP, warmly thanked the government of Sweden for its financial support to the STRP. The materials to be considered at Standing Committee 37 include substantive draft Resolutions (DRs) on new and emerging scientific and technical issues, including on wetlands and human health, wetlands and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, wetlands and climate change, wetlands and biofuels, the conservation and management of urban wetlands, and global waterbird flyways. In addition, STRP has prepared a number of new, updated or consolidated guidance for CPs on different aspects of wise use implementation, including on river basin management, ecological character, data and information needs, biogeographic regionalisation for Ramsar site designation, and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment response options. The panel has also prepared proposals for some refinements to its modus operandi and for its future scientific and technical priorities. STRP is also preparing a number of supporting COP10 Information Papers providing the background to some of these guidances and is also working on finalising a number of more detailed review or methodological reports requested of it by COP9, which will be published in the coming months as *Ramsar Technical Reports* including, importantly given the COP10 theme, its review of wetlands and human health issues.

He then introduced a brief overview of the structure and content of the new draft Strategic Plan 2009-2014, noting that it build on the two previous Strategic Plans and particularly the Annex to Resolution IX.8 providing “A Framework for the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2003-2008 in the 2006 -2008 period”. The main content of the Plan is organized under the same five Goals as the previous plan. Within these Goals are a set of 26 Strategies for how we achieve these goals. For each Strategy there is a small number of Key Result Areas (KRAs) identified, and these are coded with who should work towards them, and at which geographical scale(s) (local/site, national, regional, global). He raised the question if the Convention had the resources and capacity to deliver the Strategic Plan ? As an introduction to the following presentation on future core budget proposals, he summarised an analysis prepared by the Secretariat of the historical trends in the growth, capacity and resources of the Convention, which is included in the SC37 agenda paper DOC. SC37-5 on the “Future Secretariat staffing and structure”. This shows that in terms of growth indicators, the trend is for steady or accelerated Convention growth in terms of number of CPs, number and area of designated Ramsar sites, and numbers of

Small Grant Fund proposals – all indicators of Secretariat workload. However, resources and Secretariat staffing have not kept pace with this growth. In absolute terms (not taking into account inflation costs) the rate of increase of core budget has progressively slowed, from an average annual core budget increase between 1987 and 1998 of CHF 232,000, to only CHF 158,000 annually between 1998 and 2008. Furthermore, although Secretariat staffing grew steadily until the late 1990s, since then growth has slowed and has now halted since 2003. In addition, in comparison with other environmental conventions, Ramsar currently has considerably fewer Secretariat staff per CP and a smaller core budget per CP than other MEAs.

The Convention budget proposal for 2009-2011 and the legal status of its Secretariat

Tobias Salathe introduced the issue of the Convention's core budget to 2009-2011, outlining the discussions at the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee and what has been prepared for SC37 consideration. SC36 requested four core budget options to be prepared, covering zero real growth, zero nominal growth, 4% annual growth, and a budget covering full costs of the proposed increased Secretariat staffing levels endorsed by SC36, which in particular would create a partnerships unit in the Secretariat as well as increasing Secretariat capacity in key areas such as information technology and communications – a budget which would be an overall average 11% growth. He noted that an assessment of the implications of the zero real growth budget indicates that by 2011, despite cutting funds for such lines as regional initiatives, there would be a budget deficit which would mean reducing Secretariat staffing. In noting the increasingly urgent need to find ways of resolving Secretariat capacity to deliver the role and work expected of it, he reported that an initial assessment of current Secretariat workloads indicate an average overload of 138%. He then outlined the current and ongoing work requested of it by Standing Committee to identify and review future options for the legal status of the Secretariat, so as to resolve a number of different current operating difficulties faced by the Secretariat. This is a complex matter, and so far it seems that no one of the three options under consideration - including 1) a revised approach to the current service and legal identity provision by IUCN, 2) independent international organisation status, or 3) moving under one or other UN mechanism, would resolve all such issues. But there are different potential benefits and disbenefits of each option. SC37 will be further considering how to bring such matters to COP10 attention.

Frequency and timing of Ramsar COPs and Regional Meetings

The final presentation by *Gerhard Sigmund* concerned Austria's proposals, first raised during SC36, and provided in DOC. SC37-4, to shift the COPs from a three-year cycle to a four-year cycle, to bring the COP timing back to an early summer (May/June) schedule, and to hold mid-term Regional Meetings, and (resources permitting) to rotate the annual Standing Committee meetings amongst different regions. He outlined a number of potential implementation efficiency improvements and costs and capacity savings, both to Parties and the Secretariat, that would derive from these proposals, including that finding additional funds needed for COP participation would occur less frequently, and that there would be an overall reduction in reporting burden (National Reports needed only once every four years).

There was a wide-ranging discussion on these proposals, particularly concerning how such mid-term Regional Meetings would operate and what would be their main purpose, and the implications for Standing Committee meetings, which include additional costs to be found for Secretariat participation if such meetings were to be held outside Gland. It was also pointed out that although moving to a four-year cycle would lead to an average annual cost saving of 25% for a number of COP-related processes, this does not mean that the core budget could be reduced,

since COP costs are additional to the funds provided therein. Whatever else might be decided in relation to COP periodicity, the participants considered it crucial to change the COP timing to be in May/June of the final year of the cycle, since having (as currently) a COP less than two months before the end of the cycle produces some real administrative and legal difficulties for the smooth running of the Secretariat. To improve clarity of operations and purpose, it was also recommended that clear terms of reference for the Standing Committee meetings, and regional meetings should be developed. There was a general consensus, subject to further consideration, including at SC37, that the proposals for a four-year COP cycle are an attractive option.

In closing these discussions, Meeting participants were reminded of the importance of the upcoming 37th meeting of the Standing Committee and were urged to review the various draft Resolutions and guidance provided in the SC37 papers, which were emailed to SC members and permanent observers and are available on www.ramsar.org/sc/37/key_sc37_agenda_papers.htm, and to pass any comments on these to their regional Standing Committee member prior to SC37, so that the views of European CPs can be fully represented during the SC37 discussions.

Working Group Session Reports

Action for culture in European wetlands

The working group reviewed progress made in the implementation of Ramsar Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21, the process of developing guidance to the CPs for incorporating cultural aspects in the management of wetlands, the guidelines for the work of the Ramsar Culture Working Group during the period 2009-2011, and called for an integrated approach to the management of all wetland values in Europe and in parts of the World in which Europe is assisting.

Presentations were made by Armenia (*Karen Jenderedjian*), Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Jaroslav Vego*), Croatia (*Eugen Draganovic*), Estonia (*Kai Kimmel*) and Sweden (*Camilla Eriksson*) of related activities in their countries. These covered, in addition to examples of archaeological interest, traditional land and water management practices, folklore and architecture, highlighted instances of contemporary cultural interest, as well as sites with both Ramsar and World Heritage designations. *Thymio Papayannis* presented the work carried out by Med-INA in the Mediterranean and the publication "Action for culture in Mediterranean wetlands". The draft Ramsar Cultural Guidance document was presented by *Dave Pritchard*.

In the discussion, the following conclusions emerged: 1) the document should be revised and finalised by the Ramsar Culture Working Group on the basis of the comments received from Standing Committee and STRP members; with the understanding that in the triennium 2009-2011 it will be kept under review and further improved as necessary. It should be translated into French and Spanish and placed in the Ramsar website. However, funds should be found for this task, and 2) the document should be presented at a side event organised during Ramsar COP10 and made widely known to contracting parties and wetland managers globally, and be promoted to those authorities responsible for cultural affairs. Inputs and offers of help are sought for this side event.

The Ramsar Culture Working Group should, during 2009-2011, facilitate the implementation of the Guidance document by CPs, develop a draft strategy for the further incorporation of cultural aspects in the work of the Convention, study and promote public administration cooperation for

the joint management of cultural and natural heritage, and collate further case experiences, including lessons learned. In addition, Europe's representation in the Working Group should be clarified (as Spain's representative resigned in 2007).

In addition, the following significant points were noted: 1) the useful role of the process to further integrate, already unified or closely cooperating services for natural and cultural heritage in different European countries, as illustrated by a large variety of national approaches, 2) the need to focus also on aesthetic aspects of wetlands, 3) the wish to relate cultural values of wetlands to their ecological character and ecosystem services, and 4) the need to provide more thought on how to address situations where cultural approaches are dynamically evolving, while wetland conservation objectives were essentially set to resist change.

Ramsar project initiatives and relations with the private sector

Christophe Lefebvre presented the ten-year partnership between the French Group Danone and the Ramsar Convention. Danone invested a total of 4 million CHF in activities for the protection of water resources in view to increase Ramsar awareness and for further training of and networking among Ramsar site managers. Danone regularly supports the preparation of World Wetlands Day communication materials, as well as the preparation of a Ramsar game, exhibits, the the Convention's website and other means, including the cash prize attributed with the Ramsar Award. In 2008, a new programme on "water schools" was launched by the Evian mineral waters company, a subsidiary of Danone, to support specific wetland-related sustainable community development projects. Three pilot projects started in 2008 Argentina, Nepal and Thailand. The programme is based on shared objectives between the Danone Group and Ramsar, a true partnership, not simply a business sponsoring programme.

Another business partnership is the one with the "Biodiversity Connections" programme of the Star Alliance airline group who provided the flights of sponsored delegates to attend this Meeting. In order to rule these, and possible additional business partnerships in the future, the Secretariat has submitted to Standing Committee a document providing a "Framework for comprehensive ecological and economic partnerships between the Ramsar Convention and the business sector", hopefully to be adopted by COP10. The discussion underlined that it was important to include in formal agreements with business companies also relevant national Ramsar Administrative Authorities, in order to make sure that common objectives are addressed in an innovative manner. Such partnerships can be opportunities to help business companies to avoid environmental risks provided through wetland loss. A priori, companies active in the water, tourist and rural development sectors are potential prime partners.

Business partnerships can also support specific wetland projects, approved by Ramsar Administrative Authorities. This led the discussion to the second item on wetland-related projects. In addition to Ramsar's Small Grants Fund, and the inclusion of non-funded project proposals (because of a lack of funds) into a Small Projects Portfolio, a rapid inventory was dressed on project funding opportunities for European countries. Besides the GEF, the different EU funding instruments are by far the most abundant and important ones and should be used as much as possible.

The LIFE Plus Programme refers not only to Natura 2000 sites but also to other biodiversity projects. One strain of the programme specifically deals with CEPA. The European Territorial Cooperation ETC succeeds the Interreg programme. We can use it for Ramsar activities that contain a economic aspects, e.g. nature tourism or Ramsar visitor centres. A third possibility is the Agricultural Fund that forms part of the European Programme for Rural Development. In its

Axis 3 are a number of funding opportunities, especially for Natura 2000 sites. Also the Leader Programme, now part of Rural Development, is a possible financing tool. Austria informed about the “EU funding handbook for Natura 2000 financing”, available from the EC homepage. In some countries also national funding handbooks have been prepared with support from the EC.

Slovakia reported about a new Swiss funding opportunity for new EU countries that can be used for wetland projects. Moldova proposed that specific paragraphs on sustainable water and land-use are integrated in the EU Neighbourhood Policy supporting eastern neighbours of the EU.

Focusing on lakes –wetland types neglected by the Convention ?

Three introductory presentations were made before the working group discussed several aspects. *Udo Gattenlöhner* presented the global network Living Lakes, bringing together organizations and institutions focusing on the sustainable development and protection of lakes and other wetland types all over the world. Living Lakes was launched in 1998 by the Global Nature Fund, and currently incorporates 45 lakes, represented through 55 mainly non-governmental organisations.

Jane Madgwick, CEO of Wetlands International, underlined that lakes are very vulnerable to changes, especially regarding inflowing nutrients and climate change. Particularly shallow lakes show quick degradation, as experienced in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads in the UK which needed to be restored with costly interventions by the Broads Authority. Local actors need to cooperate with scientific experts in order to decide on appropriate response measures, taking into account the entire water catchment. Cooperation with local communities is of high importance in order to contribute to the livelihoods of local people and involve them in sustainable development strategies.

Djana Bejko, of the Regional Environment Centre (REC) in Albania, explained that Shkodra Lake is a good example for the development of a cross-border lake management plan, involving the two countries Albania and Montenegro. Close cooperation between different stakeholder groups in both countries is essential to properly manage shared lake resources. The establishment of a transboundary Shkodra Lake Forum was crucial in that process. A Shkodra Lake Declaration was jointly launched. Technical assistance and capacity building played an important role in the implementation of the measures developed jointly.

Even with the Ramsar Convention clearly including lakes under the term wetlands, the perception of the public, and sometimes even the CPs, is that the Convention predominantly focuses on wetlands types such as mires, swamps and marshes. The large proportion of such wetland types listed under Ramsar is proof of this wrong perception. It is important for Ramsar to represent a large variety of different ecosystem types, and the inclusion in the Ramsar List of under-represented wetland types should be continued. The group urges to designate more large lakes, and also rivers and particularly important river stretches, for the Ramsar List.

The economic values of lakes (fisheries, recreation, drinking water, transport) are more evident than some of the other services of lakes and other wetland types existing along their shores, such as carbon sinks, water retention and groundwater quality improvement. Some European lakes are ‘over-managed’ by too many institutions with different aims. Integrated Lake Basin Management must particularly consider upstream aspects, as changes here directly affect the hydrological regime and water quality of downstream lakes. Examples from Turkey and Slovenia underline the need for a close cooperation between national Ramsar focal points and the relevant local stakeholder groups. Often, concrete activities focus too much on projects with a limited duration, rather than on finding institutional and financial means for the continuation of activities after the end of specific project cycles.

Ramsar's Wise Use approach provides the right frame for regional sustainable development, including traditional uses of lakes, and other wetland types, to create benefits for people living and working in their watersheds. In areas with very high population densities or intensive tourism activities, such as around the Ramsar sites of lake Constance and lake Balaton (the former listed only very partially, the latter listed in its entirety under Ramsar), finding sustainable solutions needs intensive cooperative work by all stakeholder groups.

Implementation of global action for peatlands by Ramsar Contracting Parties

Tatiana Minayeva summarized how peatland issues were integrated into Ramsar Convention tools and presented the activities of Ramsar's coordination committee for Global Action on Peatlands (CC-GAP). *Magnus Brandel* presented examples of wise use of peatlands by the Swedish Peatmoss Association.

Then, the group discussed how the European Parties are implementing the actions listed in the Annex of Resolution VIII.17 and focused on key issues re European wetlands on peat soil during the next triennium, and possible synergies between ongoing international processes. A number of Parties briefly reported on how they implement the Resolution at national level and shared the problems encountered while doing so. It was agreed that the CC-GAP should provide advice for such implementation and assist with its further development, support information exchange and identify emerging issues at the global level.

A number of problems at national level regarding the implementation of Global Action on Peatlands were listed, notably the need of guidelines in terminology on peatlands, the absence of basic peatland knowledge in some countries and their need of assistance, the existence of incentives for increased use of peatlands (e.g. as a biofuel), the lack of a global overview while having to address national problems, the need for national strategies for peatland conservation and wise use, the need for a methodology for the assessment of the status of peatlands at national level, and the absence of specific legislation in most countries.

During the next triennium priority issues of peatland wise use to be addressed include: how to deal with the long term threat of peatland transformation for forestry and agricultural use, the need to take into account regional differences when developing recommendation for peatland management and restoration, the importance of taking into account international peat trading issues beyond national policies (Baltic states are important peat exporters to the West), the need for increased cooperation with the peat industry regarding information exchange, development of best practices for restoration and after use, the need to include peatland ecosystem services into site management plans and economic risk assessments, the need to develop peatland restoration principles (specifying clear goals), and to put more emphasis in the climate change discussions on land-use changes, the inventories of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adaptive strategies.

In preparation for COP10, the CC-GAP could prepare an analysis of information provided in Ramsar National Reports and specific questionnaires on the status of peatlands at national scale, contribute to further work of the STRP on the carbon storage capacities of different wetland types, draft an overview of the emerging issues that will affect peatlands during the next triennium, and comment specifically on peatland-related draft Resolutions to be submitted to COP10.

During the next triennium, CC GAP could collect examples of good national peatland policies, such as the Swedish one, providing interesting rules that no intact mire can any longer be used

for peat extraction, that peatland issues were integrated into the national ecological code, and that no biodiversity and climate change arguments can any longer be accepted for peat extraction. Information and guidelines about ways of peatland restoration after their use, depending on biogeographical regions, should be analysed and shared more widely. Further work to define what can be considered sustainable use of peatlands, in view of the development of certification and related incentive mechanisms, is highly recommended. Different conventions should aim to develop coordinated and harmonized approaches to the ways of sustainable use of peat in the long run.

Focusing on river basin wetlands and their management

The session started with three presentations. *Anke Rothgaenger*, of the Baden-Württemberg State Institute for Environment, Measurement and Nature Conservation (Germany), and *Emmanuel Thiry*, of the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territorial Planning, showed how the EU Natura 2000 designation of floodplain sites along the Upper Rhine river provided the framework for the preparation of management plans on both sides in Germany and France. The Natura 2000 management plans provide the basis for actions and transboundary cooperation under the, soon to be designated, Transboundary Ramsar site. The advantage of the EU designation is that its delineation and management are legally secured by the obligation for site management plans in accordance with the EU Natura 2000 regulations.

Ilya Trombitsky, of the Eco-Tiras Association of River Keepers in Moldova, presented the process and the shortcomings of the transborder management planning for Ramsar sites within the Dniester river basin shared between Moldova and Ukraine. The river basin includes six Ramsar sites, of which four are located in the border area. The main process for the sites and the river basin management is NGO-driven. The initial objective is the creation of a framework agreement between the governments to designate and manage the future Transboundary Ramsar site.

Goran Gugic, of the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park and Ramsar site in Croatia, presented the application of Ramsar's critical path approach in the middle Sava floodplain, taking up Ramsar's incentive slogan "start anywhere, just get started". This triggered a discussion on the challenge to integrate wetlands into river basin management and extending this to the basin level. He explained that wetland management has to be seen within the context of the surrounding landscape. The critical path approach is to be seen as a closed cycle with three pillars: communication across sectors, cooperation between sectors, and synchronization of planning and management activities between different sectors.

The discussions developed the following recommendations: 1) Crucial issues in site management are awareness and communication. There is a continued need for tools in communication and cooperation. Tools, which have been successfully used by site managers, shall be facilitated and communicated to other site managers. 2) It is important to continue providing training, study tours, guidelines or tools for communication and stakeholder involvement to site managers. But the success depends on the site managers' ability to adjust communication tools to the given situation on site. 3) Site managers must work with people and learn the language of the various stakeholders. The site manager must be able to identify competent representatives to be nominated for stakeholder committees. 4) In the process of stakeholder involvement, it is crucial to find mechanisms to ensure information feedback from the stakeholder committee to the interest groups they are representing. Regular contact with both the members of the committee and the interest groups in general is extremely important. 5) The critical path approach should be understood as a cycle, you can enter at any stage depending on the given situation but the cycle shall be completed. 6) When stakeholder groups are established and conflicts appear, the will to

find a solution actually rises because of the existence of the committee. The site manager must have an eye for predicting problems or conflicts between the individual interests of several stakeholders. 7) Sequencing is an important approach in monitoring the success of the site management: start monitoring the key indicators, which shall be selected on the basis of the ecological key processes. 8) To improve the integration of wetlands into the river basin management and to upscale them to basin level, the Ramsar Convention is encouraged to adopt the concept of serial sites as it has been implemented under the World Heritage Convention, particularly in relation to ensuring the integrity and coherency of the river basin wetlands.

Meeting of the partners in the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)

Jan-Petter Huberth Hansen from Norway gave a historical overview on how the initiative came into being, following the Nordic Wetland Conference in spring 2004, on its current status and the thoughts about the way ahead. The current chair of the initiative, *Tiina Niikkonen* from Finland, informed about potential activities to be executed during the Finnish chairmanship, notably the expert seminar on management of Ramsar sites, to be held in Finland in September 2008.

The participants wish to see NorBalWet being endorsed as a regional initiative operating under the Ramsar Convention during the next triennium, based on the procedural decisions to be taken during COP10, as outlined in the draft Resolution text on regional initiatives, submitted to Standing Committee (DOC. SC37-8). It was agreed that NorBalWet should be an informal forum for exchange of information, knowledge, experience, etc. on wetland issues in the region. It was also agreed to continue the cooperation with the identified countries, but the forum will be open for the possibility for other countries to participate.

The participants requested the Finnish chair to focus on the following issues and to circulate relevant agenda papers prior to the third formal NorBalWet meeting in September 2008:

Mandate: Development of a short and concise Mandate for NorBalWet, based on existing documents from former meetings (Nordic Wetland Conference May 2004, Working group meeting in Norway March 2005 establishing NorBalWet, the first formal meeting in Sweden in May 2006 (including the documents prepared by SEPA on the future NorBalWet cooperation), recommendations from the Randsfjorden workshop in Norway in September 2006, the second formal meeting in Estonia in September 2007), the Ramsar Resolution VIII.30 on regional initiatives, and the presentation given by Tobias Salathe at this meeting, making reference to the upcoming draft Resolution for COP10 (cf. above). NorBalWet members will be invited to comment on this draft Mandate text.

Funding: Investigate possible funding opportunities including the Nordic Council of Ministers, Norwegian Financial Grants, EU financial instruments replacing Interreg, etc.

Contacts: Work out a list of contact persons in each country. This list should include national Ramsar Administrative Authorities, governmental institutions and organizations, NGOs, etc.

Website: Further develop a website, based on the preliminary page developed by the Dokka Delta Wetland Centre, financed by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management. Norway will look into the possibility to support the further development of this webpage. It will be developed in close cooperation with the Finnish chair.

Coordination and Chairs: Investigate the possibilities to employ a part-time coordinator to follow up and secure the continuity and progress of the work between formal meetings. The incoming co-

chair Finland will investigate if they could chair for two years rather than only one. The same would apply for the other co-chairs (currently Estonia and Norway).

Next meeting: The next formal members' meeting of NorBalWet Initiative will be held back-to-back with the regional wetlands seminar on Ramsar site management in Finland in September 2008.

Meeting of the partners of the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative (CWI)

The group focused on the history and the current status of the CWI. It was noted that the development of CWI started in 2004 with generous support from all seven Carpathian countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine) and organisations like Wetlands International, BirdLife International, Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative and the Secretariats of the Ramsar and Carpathian Conventions. Representatives of all countries made short presentations on their projects and activities and discussed the CWI Strategy and Work Plan, its funding needs and opportunities and the content of future projects. All countries are Parties to both conventions, and the initiative works for improved implementation of both conventions in this mountain region with major freshwater resources and known for its biodiversity and cultural richness. The initiative will focus on further Ramsar site designations and the management of transboundary sites.

The participants recommended 1) to support endorsement of the initiative as the proper mechanism to implement the objectives outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, 2) to collaborate further and to search support from the Ramsar Convention for the establishment of the Carpathian Regional Wetland Centre, 3) to make efforts at national and regional levels for the designation of new Carpathian Wetlands of International Importance, including transboundary ones, 4) to start the implementation of the activities listed in the Work Plan for 2008 and for 2009-2011, which will be reviewed by CWI Board Members before 23 May 2008, 5) to support the endorsement of CWI by COP10, and to allocate finances from 2009 for its activities and for the Carpathian Regional Wetland Centre.

The work of STRP – national networking, roles of Administrative Authorities and National Focal Points

The working group session started with a presentation by *Michael Steiner* of the outputs and key messages produced by the first meeting of European STRP National Focal Points (NFP) organized and hosted by Austria in Mittersill in September 2007 (the full report is available at www.ramsar.org/mtg/mtg_reg_europe2008_index.htm). This was completed by an update on recent developments since the Mittersill meeting by *Nick Davidson*, underlining the remaining problems with lack of nominations in some countries and the impossibility to contact some NFPs via email.

Key messages from the meeting of NFPs to the STRP members at global scale include: 1) Communication and networking between STRP NFPs of a region, according to Resolution IX.11 (Revised modus operandi of STRP), is highly welcomed by the European STRP NFPs, and should be promoted and strengthened, 2) The European STRP NFPs feel that there is a huge gap between them and the global STRP, and that currently established bridges are not yet working well, 3) In order to overcome the reluctance and passivity of some CPs, the Ramsar Secretariat should transmit a concise document to the Administrative Authorities detailing the necessary

actions identified by this meeting, and 4) STRP NFPs should be involved in all Ramsar processes in their country (i.e. participation in wetland projects, National Ramsar Committees, national reporting, creating national wetland conservation strategies, etc.).

In the discussion, the European STRP Networker, *Karen Jenderedijan*, reported about remaining problems to communicate with NFPs. *Sandra Hails* identified similar problems to communicate with CEPA NFPs. Possible reasons are capacity problems of the nominated persons, who are often fulfilling similar roles for Ramsar, CBD, UNFCCC and possibly also other international conventions.

Michael Steiner suggested that Ramsar could make better use of NFPs by providing them some incentives to act as “driving forces” for Ramsar site nomination. Although Europe has already 904 sites listed, it is still important to identify gaps. Communication only works properly when people know each other. Therefore physical meetings, such as the first one in Mittersill, can be very effective. It was also regretted that STRP NFPs are not sufficiently present at Ramsar COPs. Increased participation of STRP NFPs in future COPs could notably increase the capacity to address complicated issues in drafting and contact groups debating issues for which it is more difficult to find a global consensus. STRP member *Dave Pritchard* felt that Ramsar’s STRP was outstanding, compared with similar bodies of other conventions. However, there was still some room for improvement. It was stressed that, fortunately, Ramsar’s STRP was focusing on scientific and technical issues, rather than on politics as the CBD SBSTTA often does.

Cyprus stated that good work and communication in the country can best be assured through the existence of a National Ramsar Committee. France shortly presented their draft Resolution text to be submitted to COP10 trying to clarify the roles of NFPs, National Ramsar Committees and other implementation bodies at national level, and the needed cooperation and coordination between them. Such harmonization could significantly reduce the work load for the persons involved. Turkey urged that STRP NFPs should always first communicate via the Administrative Authority, but that many countries avail on very good cooperation with NGOs. Belgium nominated a scientist from a scientific institute as STRP NFP in order to prevent the STRP work from becoming too political. More and more STRP NFPs are also dealing with CEPA activities, a very welcomed development. The visibility of the partners is important for communication.

Using CEPA tools to change behaviour

There are many CEPA activities and products that can be show-cased in the European region and some recent examples were shared during the plenary CEPA presentation – from brochures, pamphlets and posters, to training workshops, building networks, effective web sites, wetland centres, and so on. It was also highlighted that CEPA interventions need to be designed with a clear target audience and intended outcome in mind. Action planning is the key to designing effective CEPA interventions

To assist Parties in action planning, a toolkit is under design by the Secretariat. The workshop was intended to briefly introduce the toolkit to participants and then to spend most of the workshop in a hands-on activity from the toolkit. The overall objectives were to introduce participants to such CEPA tools and to raise interest in, and awareness of, the toolkit.

A number of tools from the toolkit were identified including: Visioning, Story telling, Focus groups, Stakeholder survey, Charting change, with a step-by-step process for producing the plan and deciding upon implementing processes.

With minimal input from the facilitator, participants were presented with step-by-step instruction sheets so that the workshop was largely self-facilitated. In short, the tool required each participant to identify a story from their own experience of the most significant positive change that they had seen take place in the behaviour of organizations or people affecting the sustainability of a wetland(s). Thereafter, participants worked in groups of four to select the best story in their group, and then to explore the questions of how the change in behaviour related to a change in knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and then how communicating, educating, participating and/or awareness-raising activities (CEPA) were used to influence this behaviour change?

With the limited time available, participants had rather less time to complete each step than would be normal but most groups were able to just complete their task. There was enough time to briefly share the work of two of the groups and allow for a few questions from other groups.

Participants thoroughly enjoyed the participatory nature of this workshop and the sharing of stories, as well as the method for analysing behaviour change and identifying the role of CEPA in this change. All 29 participants of this workshop will be informed when the toolkit is finalised and invited to consider using the toolkit.

Wetland Excursion to the Stockholm Archipelago

On 6 May, SEPA offered the participants a boat excursion to the coastal wetlands of the Stockholm archipelago including a short visit ashore on the island (75 ha) of **Ängsö National Park**, established in 1909 as one of Sweden's first parks. It preserves a splendid example of cultivated landscape from the early 20th century. Park staff maintains a situation similar to the one during the two hundred years of human settlement, before the last permanent settlers left the island in 1927. The cultural landscape on the island is a mosaic of dry and wet meadows and old-growth, deciduous forests dominated by oak (*Quercus*) and linden (*Tilia*) with rich associated flora and fauna. The Ramsar Meeting participants enjoyed during their visit abundantly flowering elder orchids (*Dactylorhiza sambucina*), fritillaries (*Fritillaria meleagris*) and cowslips (*Primula veris*) among others, while the bird sanctuary on the island, with a forested and a coastal marine part, was out of reach during the breeding season.

On the boat, information was provided by *Henrik Schreiber* of SEPA (orally and on paper), on the particular ecosystems of the Baltic Sea with its gradients from fresh to marine waters and the associated ecological communities. Eutrophication is a major problem due to run-offs from agricultural areas, adding nitrogen and phosphorus to the marine environment. The high nutrient concentrations stimulate algal growth and lead to oxygen deficiency crises. Cyanobacteria blooms in summer 2006 were most alarming. One fourth of the Baltic sea floor is void of life due to low oxygen concentrations. Measures to reverse this situation have become a top issue on the political agenda in recent years. They are coordinated by Helcom, the Helsinki Commission, implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan with the aim to restore the marine environment to a good ecological status by the year of 2021. The plan focuses on eutrophication, toxic substances, maritime activities and biodiversity. 62 Baltic Sea Protected Areas have now been identified. They complete the 50 coastal Ramsar sites along the Baltic shores. The excursion boat passed not far from one of them, Ramsar site N°435, the **Stockholm Outer Archipelago**, with four groups of sparsely vegetated islands supporting birch (*Betula*) scrub, wet meadows and *Juniperus* bushes, and holding a large breeding colony of marine ducks (*Melanitta fusca*). Various other nesting waterbirds

occur in the archipelago and were easily observed by the international Ramsar expert community. Human activities in the archipelago include fishing, boating and swimming.

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[Accents in names are omitted, for ease of e-mail transmission.]

Thanks also to the keynote speakers (their names are listed above in the summaries of their talks), as well as to the chairs and rapporteurs of the plenary sessions (in alphabetical order): *Olivier Biber, Nick Davidson, Sandra Hails, Karen Jenderedjian, Jan Kadlecik, Torsten Larsson, Lars-Erik Liljelund, Tobias Salathe, Gerhard Sigmund, Libuse Vlasakova* and *Monica Zavagli*.

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Further thanks to all those who actively contributed to the group sessions with specific presentations or contributions to the discussions, too numerous to be listed here, but representing the bulk of the remaining participants. In addition participants from Armenia, the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, the Czech Republic, Coastwatch Ireland, the Living Lakes network, the Dokka Delta Ramsar Centre in Norway, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Wetlands International exhibited posters on specific Ramsar sites, wetland projects and national programmes.

At the Ramsar Secretariat, a big thank goes to *Monica Zavagli* for her unfailing devotion to the preparatory and organisational work, supported to a much minor degree by *Tobias Salathe* and *Paulette Kennedy*, as well by the actively participating colleagues *Tiega Anada, Nick Davidson* and *Sandra Hails*.