

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

**30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Gland, Switzerland, 12-16 January 2004**

**DOC. SC30-14**

Agenda item 12

**Progress in the establishment of a Regional Ramsar Centre for  
Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere**

***Action requested:* The Standing Committee is invited to note the progress reported on the establishment of the Regional Ramsar Center in Panama.**

1. At the 20th meeting of the Standing Committee held in Gland, Switzerland, in 1997, a proposal was submitted to create a Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere, taking advantage of the benefits and facilities offered by Panama at Ciudad del Saber (the “City of Knowledge”). Subsequently the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), formed by the Ministers for the Environment of Central America, in its XXIV regular session, held in Belize in 1998, also endorsed the creation of such a Center.
2. The governments of the Ramsar Americas regions endorsed the proposal for establishing the center during the first Pan-American meeting of the Ramsar Convention, held in Costa Rica in June 1998. The proposal was then endorsed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, held in San José, Costa Rica, in May 1999, through Resolution VII.26.
3. The Government of Panama and the Ramsar Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding for establishing the Center during the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee held in Gland, Switzerland, in February 2003.
4. The first meeting of the Board of the Centre took place in Panama City on 27 May 2003, when the Terms of Reference for the Director of the Center and a timetable for recruitment of the Director were agreed.
5. The post of Director was advertised in June 2003, and a shortlist of candidates was prepared in July 2003. In the week of 15 September 2003, interviews were conducted in Panama City by the Director General of the Panamanian Environment Authority and a Representative of the Smithsonian Institute.
6. The final stages of recruitment of the Director are now in the hands of the Panamanian Government.

7. The Ramsar Secretariat and the Government of Panama acknowledge with thanks the cash contribution of SFr 9,626 made by the Wetlands Council Secretariat of the Government of Canada to support future activities of the Center. They also acknowledge with thanks the kind offer of the Government of Japan, through its Embassy in Panama City, to contribute the necessary electronic equipment required to make the training center fully operational.