

Agenda item 9.8

Revised *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to consider and advise on the issues raised in the STRP's review of the effectiveness of its current *modus operandi* and its recommendations for amendments to the *modus operandi* for the next triennium, and is invited to approve the draft COP9 Resolution and annexed revised *modus operandi* for the 2006-2008 triennium. The Standing Committee may also wish to request the Secretariat and STRP Chair to review the current list of organizations appointed by COP8 as invited observers to the STRP and, in consultation with these organizations, to provide a revised list of observer organizations in the finalized text of COP9 DR12.

Note by the Ramsar Secretariat and Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

1. Since its establishment, the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has delivered a very significant amount of work to support implementation of the Convention, embodied in the Ramsar 'Toolkit' of Wise Use Handbooks, 2nd Edition (2004). This is a remarkable achievement, given the small size and very limited resourcing of the Panel and of the Ramsar Secretariat in support of it.
2. Nevertheless, as the Convention as a whole has progressed, limitations concerning the STRP's mode of working, and the roles and responsibilities of its various players, became clear during the last triennium.
3. In an attempt for clarify the purpose of the STRP and the roles expected of appointed members and other s in the STRP process, a significantly amended and strengthened *modus operandi* was approved at COP8 (Annex to Resolution VIII.28).
4. This Resolution also established the "STRP Support Service" as a mechanism to strengthen support for the work of the Panel. Although originally proposed to be implemented through the appointment of an additional member of the Secretariat technical staff to assist the Deputy Secretary General, the Standing Committee and COP8 determined that this service should be out-sourced under contract and invited the Convention's four International Organization Partners (IOPs) to offer to host the Service, a task which by their mutual agreement Wetlands International undertook.
5. The STRP Support Service, and in particular the STRP Support Service Web site it has established, have made a significant contribution to facilitating the work of the Panel during this triennium. Nevertheless, both Wetlands International and the Ramsar Secretariat have identified a number of constraints and limitations to efficiency inherent in running such an out-sourced service for a key Convention process. By mutual agreement,

it is proposed not to continue to out-source the main work of the Support Service for the 2005-2008 triennium.

6. Reductions in the 2003 -2005 core budget identified at the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee in 2004 significantly reduced the allocation for the Support Service. This reduction has meant that there have been no resources to undertake the planned role of the Support Service to work with and better engage the STRP National Focal Points, and the lack of capacity to engage this potentially important network remains a serious concern.
7. Despite the establishment of the revised 2003-2005 *modus operandi* by COP8, a number of concerns remain about the current efficiency of the Panel during the present triennium.
8. These issues were raised by the Chair of the STRP in his progress report to the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee in January 2004, and they concerned the level of engagement and involvement of the STRP's appointed members, the STRP Support Service, and funding for the Panel's work. These are further discussed in the summary of STRP12's review discussion below.
9. Resolution VIII.28 expected that the STRP *modus operandi* and the operations of the STRP Support Service would be kept under review. Given the proposal to no longer out-source the STRP Support Service in the next triennium, a COP9 draft Resolution proposing amendments to the current *modus operandi* will be necessary. However, it should be noted that many of the STRP12's recommendations will be dependent on decisions on core budget allocations for the work of the Panel in 2006-2008.
10. STRP's review and recommendations were considered by the Standing Committee's Subgroup on COP9 in March 2005. In Decision SG COP9-6, the Subgroup on COP9 "urged that the STRP and Secretariat further develop the recommendations in the draft *modus operandi* for SC31, with the inclusion of a mechanism for articulating the priorities and financial implications both before and during COP9. The Subgroup requested that a costed programme should be included as an annex to the draft technical Resolution on future priorities."
11. This paper provides the STRP's review and recommendations. It is followed by a proposal for COP9 DR12 "Revised *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel", with the revised *modus operandi* provided as an annex to the DR.
12. In addition to these issues and recommendations, during STRP12 the Panel expressed concern that for a number of the organizations invited as STRP observers by COP8 Resolution VIII.28, representatives have neither participated in STRP's meetings and/or had not contributed to the work or debates of the Panel.
13. The Secretariat in consultation with the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair has reviewed this situation, and recommend:
 - i. that COP9 be asked to renew its invitation to the following organizations to participate as STRP observers for the 2006-2008 triennium:

- the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 - the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
 - the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
 - the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
 - the Secretariats of the CBD, CMS, UNCCD and UNFCCC
 - UNEP – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)
 - the Society of Wetland Scientists
 - the International Mire Conservation Group
 - the International Peat Society
 - the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
 - The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
 - the Institute for Inland Water Management and Wastewater Treatment (RIZA) (The Netherlands);
- ii. that COP9 be asked to invite the following additional organizations to participate as observers for the 2006-2008 triennium, in view of their increasing links with or relevance to the work of the Convention:
- UNESCO – Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)
 - the Secretariat of CITES
 - the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
 - the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) [Note that in the event that COP9 approves IWMI's request for International Organization Partner status, IWMI would then become an IOP member of the STRP.]
 - the Global Water Partnership (GWP)
 - the World Water Council (WWC);
- iii. that the Secretariat be requested to clarify with the following organizations if they should be recommended to COP9 for continued invitations for observer status, in view of their lack of contribution during 2003-2005 and/or their changing organizational priorities:
- the International Association of Limnology
 - the Global Wetlands Economics Network
 - the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University, USA
 - Ducks Unlimited (Canada, Mexico, and USA)
 - the World Resources Institute (WRI)
 - LakeNet;
- iv. that the following organization has completed its work and therefore should not be re-invited for 2006-2008:
- the Secretariat of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

14. The STRP is currently identifying its recommended priorities for the 2006-2008 work plan, and the financial implications of these priorities, and these will be provided to the Standing Committee as parts of DOC. SC31-16 "Future priorities for the scientific and technical implementation of the Convention" (Agenda item 8.11). Under than agenda item, the Standing Committee will be invited to endorse these priorities for COP9 consideration.

STRP's review of its *modus operandi*

Summary of issues and recommendations

15. During its 12th meeting, the STRP reviewed a wide range of issues and concerns about its present operations, and in Decision STRP12-34 the participants agreed that their recommendations should be reported to the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP9 and then incorporated into a draft COP9 Resolution for the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2005.
16. The Panel identified a number of constraints and difficulties in undertaking its work under its present *modus operandi*. These include:
 - the onus placed upon a few key people to ensure coherence across the suite of tasks;
 - the delay in building and implementing a work plan following the last COP, including the lack of funding to engage experts to prepare draft materials;
 - the loss of momentum after the first enthusiastic and ambitious work-plan session at the Panel's first plenary session of the triennium;
 - the limited expertise of each of the members appointed to the Panel;
 - the difficult role of observer organization representatives who must act as liaison with less motivated experts within their organizations; and
 - the excessive number of tasks assigned by the COP and SC, even within the SC's prioritization for this triennium.
17. The Panel's recommendations concern the following topics:
 - i. the contributions and roles of appointed members;
 - ii. the pattern and timing of meetings during a triennium;
 - iii. prioritisation of future STRP tasks;
 - iv. a rolling six-year programme of work for the STRP;
 - v. ensuring that best expert advice is available to the Panel and the Convention;
 - vi. the role of CEPA as a cross-cutting issue;
 - vii. funding of the work of the Panel;
 - viii. the role of the STRP Support Service;
 - ix. the role of the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs); and
 - x. other issues concerning the scope and focus of future STRP work.
18. The Panel's recommendations concerning its future *modus operandi* are as follows. Further information on each of the issues addressed by the recommendations is provided in the sections which follow.

- i. **Contributions and roles of appointed members.** Regardless of any further amendments to the *modus operandi* with respect to appointed members, the Panel recommends that it is essential that Parties nominate for the Panel experts in their own right, with the appropriate level of knowledge of wetland conservation and wise use, and with the necessary language abilities, so as to have the strongest possible Panel.
- ii. **Pattern and timing of meetings during a triennium.** The Panel suggests that the *modus operandi* should be revised to allow for a mechanism to establish, immediately after COP, a set of expert Working Groups to develop the scope and contents of guidelines and other tasks requested of the Panel, followed by a plenary Panel review meeting, mid-term workshops for expert Working Groups, and a final Panel plenary for review and approval of products. Such an approach would be facilitated by prior prioritization of STRP tasks by the COP on the advice of the Panel and Standing Committee (see below). There would also be some financial and other implications of this proposed approach, which will need further consideration.
- iii. **Prioritisation of future STRP tasks.** The Panel recommends that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel, working with Working Group Co-leads and the Secretariat, should present to the Standing Committee and COP for approval an outline programme for subsequent STRP work which would include recommended priorities (in terms of both themes and specific tasks, including recommendations on work to be carried over to the next triennium and emerging issues) and an initial estimate of the costs of undertaking these tasks.
- iv. **A rolling six-year programme of work for the STRP.** The STRP's *modus operandi* should be modified so as to create mechanisms for a six-year rolling programme of work for the Panel. Continuity of Panel work across triennia can be achieved through appropriate Working Groups, once established, continuing their work into the subsequent triennium, and with continuity of appropriate appointed members of the Panel. Given that at present there are no funds to cover consultancy work where the Panel needs such expertise, having a rolling programme would mean that as and when any such funds do become available, pending priority work can be initiated more rapidly.
- v. **Ensuring that the best expert advice is available to the Panel and the Convention.** The Panel recommends that a mechanism be established to appoint an expert "Technical Advisor" (paid or unpaid) for each of the Panel's priority themes of work. Such advisors would be tasked to advise on the scope and contents of products requested of the Panel within their areas of expertise, identify lead experts with the appropriate global expertise to prepare draft materials, and support and guide the work of any relevant Working Group established by the Panel. Budget implications of such a mechanism will need to be recognized.
- vi. **The role of CEPA as a cross-cutting issue.** Consideration should be given to establishing a mechanism for the CEPA Specialist Group to act as a 'standing advisory group' to the Panel, perhaps through the appointment of the Chair of the Specialist Group as a "Technical Advisor". This recommendation should be integrated with discussions under agenda item 13 (Resolution VIII.31 on the Convention's CEPA Programme).

- vii. **Funding of the work of the Panel.** The Panel urges the Standing Committee and COP to consider the allocation of a core budget for substantive work, so that the Panel can initiate high priority work in a timely manner. The Panel stresses that it cannot guarantee future delivery of work expected of it, especially given the likelihood of diminishing voluntary and in-kind support upon which it has depended thus far for much of the work for which it has been applauded by Parties. The Panel will seek to provide estimates of the costs of the priority work given to it.
- viii. **The role of the STRP Support Service.** The Panel supports the proposal that the Secretariat provide support for the STRP in the next triennium, and it recommends that core budget funding be re-aligned to support the Panel's future work.
- ix. **The role of the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs).** Developing the involvement and capacity of the STRP NFP network should be a priority in the next triennium, and the NFPs' current Terms of Reference should be reviewed and revised as appropriate.
- x. **Other issues concerning the scope and focus of future STRP work.** The Panel requests the Standing Committee to consider the future scope and opportunities for widening its work, including *inter alia* advising on site designation and management issues, reviewing the use of existing tools, identifying gaps in the Convention, and interaction with the work of other conventions. Such a broader role could be achieved through a balance between forward, proactive and strategic advice and responsive problem-solving on emerging one-off issues. It is recognized, however, that increasing the scope of activities of the STRP members will not be feasible for volunteer STRP participants without additional resourcing.

Contributions and roles of appointed members

- 19. The Panel is a "review panel" whose members should therefore have appropriate expertise to review and approve the scope and approach to preparing the STRP's products and reviewing and approving final draft documents. However, this triennium has been no different from past ones, with too much new work expected to be led and delivered by appointed members and organizations who are volunteers.
- 20. Nominations and appointments of members are expected to be of people as wetland and water experts appointed in their own right for this expertise. However, nominations and appointments for this triennium have in a number of cases not been relevant to the expertise required for the work foreseen. Furthermore, despite the attempt this triennium to ensure nomination of people with expertise in the priority topics of the Panel's work, and with appropriate language skills, this occurred in relatively few cases. This is a key but delicate issue that will need careful consideration and resolution.
- 21. Only half of the of 14 appointed members appear to have visited the STRP Support Service Web site, and the attendance of these appointed members at STRP12 was also disappointingly low, despite their having agreed to be nominated and having made a commitment to provide the time needed for contributing to the Panel's work.

22. Likewise, several of the observer organizations invited by COP8 to participate in the STRP have not attended meetings, and others have (*contra* the terms of the *modus operandi*) sent different representatives to each meeting, thus failing to deliver the expected continuity of understanding and involvement.
23. A key consequence of this situation is that much of the substantive work of the Panel has been undertaken by a small number of people. Also, given the very limited resourcing for the Panel, costs of bringing appointed members to plenary meetings who have not contributed intersessionally work of the Panel is hardly cost-effective.

Pattern and timing of meetings during a triennium

24. The current *modus operandi* has in the triennium a first plenary STRP meeting, then mid-term workshops for any Working Groups and other processes established by the Panel, and a final plenary meeting to sign off on materials for Standing Committee and COP consideration.
25. The Panel stressed the value of the mechanism of establishing Working Groups for specific topics and of having mid-term workshops for Working Group members to progress their work. It recognized that operating only by electronic means between the two plenary sessions is not an effective substitute for a mid-term face-to-face session.
26. There are both pros and cons to holding the first plenary meeting of the triennium in the present manner. There is recognized value to appointed members of such a meeting, in that when they are unfamiliar with the Convention and its processes, such a meeting is important for introducing new members into the process.
27. However, under the current construct, at its first meeting the Panel is expected to prepare its detailed work plan, including the scope and terms of reference for the preparation of each of its proposed substantive products. Given the limitations outlined above with respect to Panel membership, this is an unrealistic expectation.
28. Furthermore, under the current process, since the Panel members are appointed by the first full Standing Committee meeting following the COP, it is not possible for the STRP to meet early in the triennium, and at the same time it must complete its work for the next COP at least nine months prior to the COP so that its materials can be reviewed by the Standing Committee. This means that the Panel has little more than 18 months to undertake and deliver what is often detailed and substantive work. This presents a major challenge, especially since under current core funding there are no funds available for rapidly initiating major work. In the current triennium, there was a further hiatus for those tasks needing expert consultancy work between the establishment of the scope and terms of reference by the Panel and the work actually being started, once some voluntary funds were generously made available by the Government of Sweden.
29. In addition, the current triennial approach to the work of the STRP leads to a considerable period of time after its final plenary of the triennium when the Panel still exists but has no work required of it for the current triennium and no mandate to initiate new work. The Panel considers that this is a wasted opportunity to fully utilize its expertise for the benefit of Convention processes. The Panel formally remains “in office” until a new Panel has

been appointed, currently by the Standing Committee at its first full meeting of the following triennium, so the advice of the Panel should be utilized up to and through the COP, and Parties are expected to find ways of including appointed STRP members in their COP national delegations. Proposals for how this period of each triennium might be better used are provided below, in relation to a rolling programme for the Panel.

30. The Panel has considered two options for ways of starting its work more rapidly in the triennium. One is to initiate work immediately after the COP through the establishment, under the guidance of the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair, of small expert Working Groups on each main priority task. Working Groups would then meet in mid-term workshops, and the full Panel with appointed members would meet once in the triennium to review and sign off on the draft materials prepared by the Working Groups, approximately eight months before the next COP.
31. The alternative option is similar, but has the Panel meeting twice in the triennium, with its first meeting approximately four to five months after the COP to review and approve the scope and contents of the guidance needed – these will by then have been prepared by each of the expert Working Groups established immediately after the COP. The Panel would then meet again to review and sign off on the draft materials prepared by the Working Groups, approximately eight months before the next COP. This has the particular advantage that the Panel would then be expected at both its meetings in a triennium to act as a ‘review panel’ rather than as a drafting group, as in the current expectation for the Panel at its first meeting.

Prioritisation of future STRP tasks

32. At present, the COP has delegated to the Standing Committee, at its first full meeting of the triennium, the task of indicating to the STRP the priorities for its work. In this triennium, the Standing Committee instructed the STRP to give high priority to six themes of work, but still within these themes are a large number of individual substantive tasks which the Panel has struggled to undertake.
33. The Panel, under its present *modus operandi*, is expected to provide advice to Standing Committee and COP on future scientific and technical implementation priorities and key emerging issues.

A rolling six-year programme of work for the STRP

34. In view of a number of the above considerations, the Panel considers that running its operations only on a triennial basis, locked to the timing of each COP and intervening Standing Committee meetings, places undue constraints upon its ability to deliver timely and high quality advice and guidance to the Convention, especially given its limited resourcing. Furthermore, a number of the Panel’s work themes can be anticipated to run for more than a single triennium, and a mechanism for Working Groups, as appropriate, to continue their operations across triennia would be valuable. The current *modus operandi* allows for some degree of continuity of Panel membership through the re-appointment of a proportion of existing members, on the advice of the STRP Chair.

35. There are a number of advantages in establishing a mechanism for a ‘rolling programme of work’ for the Panel, perhaps for six-year periods. This would be in line with the approach adopted for the Convention’s Strategic Plan and with a continuous review of tasks and priorities as the years progress. Under this approach the Panel would advise on and receive from COP priorities for its work and would deliver products against these priorities for Parties, as and when its capacity permits, and these would be submitted for consideration to the next available COP. In that respect, it would be helpful if COP Resolutions instructing work for the STRP were formulated as “provide advice and guidance to Contracting Parties and the COP” rather than being overly prescriptive (such as “prepare guidelines for COP9”).
36. The creation of the new *Ramsar Technical Report* series, for detailed scientific and technical reviews and reports, has already gone some way towards implementation of a rolling programme, since these will be published as and when peer-review and editing is completed, rather than being provided specifically to COP as Information Papers. Likewise, the current proposal being considered by the Standing Committee concerning implementation of Resolution VIII.45, whereby the STRP would be requested to provide advice on any draft COP Resolution submitted by a Party or Parties, would go some way towards filling the hiatus in STRP’s activities in the run-up to the COP.

Ensuring that best expert advice is available to the Panel and the Convention

37. As outlined above, the ability of the Panel to respond with high quality advice and guidance remains highly dependent upon who happens to be appointed as members of the Panel, and which individuals participate in Panel work from the IOP Panel members and observer organizations. This means that the Panel as currently constituted cannot be guaranteed to have available the best global expertise on any particular topic for which it must give priority attention. Furthermore, it is clear that the ability of individual experts and organizations to provide voluntary time and in-kind support is diminishing in an increasingly privatized and competitive world.
38. In this and the last triennium, it was possible to bring in additional global expertise to prepare draft guidelines and other materials to a limited extent, owing to some voluntary funding becoming available from Parties in the course of a triennium. But the ability to do this remains a significant uncertainty when the Panel is constructing its work plan, and this is a frustration to all concerned. DOC. SC31-3, paragraph 28, lists the significant priority tasks which were scoped by the present Panel but which could not be pursued owing to lack of resources. Appointment of an expert “Technical Advisor” to support each priority work theme is recommended.

CEPA as a cross-cutting issue

39. The current approach for incorporating communications, education and public awareness issues into the work of the Panel, whereby Wetlands International’s CEPA Specialist Group acts as a cross-cutting advisory group, has not been greatly successful in this triennium owing to the lack of resourcing for the group to be able to respond to its responsibilities towards the STRP.

Funding the work of the Panel

40. The STRP12 review stressed the Panel's continuing lack of funding for its work – a major concern given the recognized importance of providing high quality and “state of the art” scientific and technical advice to Parties for Convention implementation. The lack of a clear budget for the preparation of the substantive work required of the Panel is a serious limitation, and it leads the Panel into difficulties and inefficient use of time in which effort is spent on establishing scope and terms of reference for key work areas, only for aspects of this work not to be undertaken due to lack of resources.
41. There would seem to be little point in having a budget for bringing appointed members to, and holding, plenary sessions if there is no guarantee that the Panel will have any substantial products to review. The STRP Chair stresses to the Standing Committee the importance of this issue.
42. Consideration should also be given to providing an honorarium to the Chair and Vice-Chair, in view of the considerable amount of time they devote, currently on an in-kind or voluntary basis – given that there is no guarantee that those persons who may be appointed as future Chair and Vice-Chair will have such capacity.
43. The Panel will seek to indicate as part of its advice to Standing Committee and COP on its future work and priorities the estimated costs of each task, and what tasks will be, and will not be, undertaken given any available budget.

STRP Support Service

44. The STRP12 review expressed great appreciation to Wetlands International in their establishment and running of the STRP Support Service during this triennium, which was seen as vital to those members and observers who have utilized it in progressing STRP's work. It has been agreed between Wetlands International and the Secretariat that the Support Service in the next triennium can be provided by the Secretariat, and the Panel's review supported this. It should be stressed that this does not imply new budget lines, but reallocation of existing budget lines in the forthcoming triennium.

STRP National Focal Points (NFPs)

45. Both the Panel and the Secretariat greatly regretted that there has been little capacity and opportunity to develop an engagement with the network of STRP National Focal Points appointed by Parties, and the Panel expressed frustration that the budget element within the STRP Support Service designed to develop and support this engagement had been cut at mid-term.
46. The review identified a number of possible further roles for STRP NFPs, which might include contributing to the collection of information on certain indicators of the effectiveness of the Convention and on site designation and management issues.
47. However, it was recognized that there is little point in energizing the STRP NFP network if the Panel itself lacks the capacity to undertake its substantive work, since there would not then be materials and draft guidance for the NFPs to review.

Other issues – scope and focus of future STRP work

48. Some members of the Panel questioned whether with its present focus on preparing technical guidelines and other reports the Panel may have become too isolated from on-the-ground conservation and wise use of wetlands. There may be value in giving the STRP a stronger role in, *inter alia*, advising on site designation and management issues, reviewing the use of existing tools, identifying gaps in the Convention, and interaction with the work of other conventions. Such a broader role could be achieved through a balance between forward, proactive and strategic advice and responsive problem-solving on emerging one-off issues. It was recognized, however, that increasing the scope of activities of the STRP members would not be feasible for volunteer STRP participants without additional resourcing.

COP9 DR12

Revised *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

1. RECALLING the establishment by Resolution 5.5 of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), made up of members with appropriate scientific and technical knowledge, appointed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), but participating as individuals and not as representatives of their countries of origin;
2. ALSO RECALLING Resolution VI.7 and Resolution VII.2 on this matter, which made successive modifications in the way in which the STRP and its work were organized;
3. FURTHER RECALLING Resolution VIII.28 which established the STRP's *modus operandi* implemented during the 2003-2005 triennium;
4. THANKING the members of the STRP and its observer organizations and invited experts for their contributions since COP8, and for their expert advice on numerous scientific and technical issues important for implementation of the Convention;
5. ALSO THANKING the Government of Sweden, WWF International, IUCN, and the WorldFish Centre for their financial contributions in support of the substantive work of the STRP during 2003-2005, and the Water Research Centre (South Africa), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), BirdLife International, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC – UK), and the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (eriss - Australia) for their in-kind support to the work of the Panel, as well as Wetlands International staff for their implementation of the STRP Support Service during the 2003-2005 triennium;
6. AWARE that the STRP has reviewed its *modus operandi*, has expressed concern about aspects of its operations and its capacity and resourcing to deliver its required tasks, and has made a number of proposals for amending its *modus operandi* designed to enhance its capacity and efficiency;
7. RE-EMPHASIZING the need to establish a close link between the STRP and the network of scientists and experts in each Contracting Party, so that the Convention may benefit from the array of existing knowledge and experience;
8. RECOGNIZING the importance for the STRP to work in partnership with the equivalent bodies of those conventions with which Memoranda of Cooperation and/or joint work plans are in place, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention to Combat Desertification, the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme, and other conventions and agreements;
9. ALSO RECOGNIZING the need for continuing cooperation between the STRP and a number of expert networks, specialist groups and societies which exist, some in association with the official International Organization Partners of the Convention; and

10. [FURTHER RECOGNISING that the priorities for the work of the STRP for 2006-2008 are identified in the Annex to COP9 DR2;]

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. REAFFIRMS the critical importance to the Convention of the work and advice of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in providing reliable guidance to the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
12. APPROVES the revised *modus operandi* for the STRP as annexed to this Resolution, and DECIDES that the provisions in the Annex supersede those in the previous Resolutions on the STRP dealing with the same issues;
13. CONFIRMS that the STRP support functions will be provided during the 2006-2008 triennium from the [Secretariat];
14. RECOGNIZES the urgent need to ensure both that the Panel is provided with the necessary resources to undertake its work effectively and that the Ramsar [Secretariat] has sufficient capacity to support this work, and URGES Contracting Parties and others to afford the highest priority to securing continuity of such funding;
15. ALSO RECOGNIZES that a high priority will be to develop the involvement and capacity of the STRP National Focal Point network to contribute to the work of the Panel, and URGES those Contracting Parties that have not yet done so to appoint a National Focal Point for the STRP, as outlined in Resolution VII.2, so that they may contribute fully to, and be more effectively assisted by, the work of the Panel;
16. REVISES as follows the list of bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the meetings of the STRP during the 2006-2008 triennium, in addition to the International Organization Partners, which serve as members, and INVITES these bodies and organizations to consider establishing close working cooperative arrangements with the STRP on matters of common interest:
 - the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 - the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
 - the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
 - the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
 - the Secretariats of the CBD, CMS, CITES, UNCCD, UNFCCC and UNESCO – Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)
 - the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
 - UNEP – World Conservation Monitoring Centre
 - the Society of Wetland Scientists
 - [the International Association of Limnology]
 - [the Global Wetlands Economics Network]
 - the International Mire Conservation Group

- the International Peat Society
 - [the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University, USA]
 - the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
 - the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
 - The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
 - [Ducks Unlimited (Canada, Mexico, and USA)]
 - [the World Resources Institute (WRI)]
 - the Institute for Inland Water Management and Wastewater Treatment (RIZA) (The Netherlands)
 - [LakeNet]
 - the Global Water Partnership (GWP)
 - the World Water Council (WWC);
17. FURTHER EMPHASIZES the value of participation by STRP members in meetings of the COP and Standing Committee, and REQUESTS Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Ramsar [Secretariat] to do their utmost to secure any additional funding which might be necessary for this purpose;
18. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to a), with the advice of the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair and [Secretariat], appoint the members of the STRP from the list of candidates submitted by Contracting Parties, on the basis of their scientific and technical wetland expertise as individuals and not representing their countries of origin, and b) designate the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair;
19. REAFFIRMS that the STRP shall have the same regional structure and proportional system of membership as the Standing Committee, as established in Resolution VII.1, and that, in order to attain equitable representation on the subsidiary bodies of the Convention, members of the STRP ought to be selected, as far as possible, from Contracting Parties different from those Parties elected to the Standing Committee; and
20. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to take into consideration the mechanism established in the annex in relation to the establishment of a rolling six-year programme for the STRP, and to seek to ensure continuity of membership of the STRP through the reappointment of a proportion of its members when proposing nominations for membership of the Panel.

Annex

***Modus operandi* of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**

I. Establishing STRP tasks and priorities

1. The STRP's programme of assignments shall operate on a rolling six-year (two triennia) programme, updated with new and emerging issues and priorities at each meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP).
2. The Chair and Vice-Chair and appointed members of the Panel, and any thematic Working Groups (and their co-leads), will continue their work to, through and after the COP into the start of the subsequent triennium, until the appointment by Standing Committee of the next Panel.
3. Within its established tasks and priorities, the Panel and its Working Groups may initiate pending priority tasks as and when resources and capacity become available.
4. The COP shall have available to it a list of STRP assignments for the next two triennia, derived from *inter alia* the Convention's Strategic Plan, COP Resolutions and draft Resolutions submitted to the COP, and the strategic advice of the Panel on emerging scientific and technical issues; the priorities for these assignments recommended by the Panel and the Standing Committee; and an estimate of the costs of undertaking these priority assignments.
5. In the light of these recommendations, the COP shall establish the priorities for STRP work in the coming triennium.
6. Immediately following the COP, the Secretariat, working with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP, will compile a thematic list of STRP's priority and other assignments, and will as far as possible identify the resources needed to undertake them, whether such resources are currently available, and a proposed mechanism for their delivery, including the continuation of existing thematic Working Groups and the establishment of new Working Groups. This will be circulated to the STRP, STRP National Focal Points, and Standing Committee for comment and approval, with a deadline of three weeks for input so as to ensure the maximum possible time for the STRP to undertake its work.

II. Composition of STRP Working Groups

7. A Working Group shall be established for each of the Panel's priority themes of work. As necessary when a theme continues as a priority area of work, the Working Group will continue its operations for more than one triennium.
8. Each Working Group shall be composed, as appropriate, of persons expert and experienced in the topic covered by the Working Group, drawn from the appointed and International Organization Partner members of the STRP, representatives of STRP observer organizations, and additional invited experts. Due consideration should be given

to geographical and gender balance and to the language abilities of the proposed experts in establishing the composition of each Working Group.

9. As required, each Working Group may create smaller ‘task forces’ to undertake the preparation of each of its priority assignments.
10. If scheduling permits, the Chair and Vice-Chair designate of the new Panel (once appointed by the Standing Committee) will be invited to participate in the first session of workshops.
11. So as to ensure that the best expert advice is available to the Panel and its Working Groups, an expert “Technical Advisor” shall be invited to support the work of each Working Group. The role of each Technical Advisor shall be to:
 - a) advise on, and develop, the scope and contents of priority products requested of the Panel within his or her areas of expertise;
 - b) advise on the identification of lead experts with the appropriate global expertise to prepare draft guidelines and other requested materials; and
 - c) assist and advise the Panel and its Working Group in reviewing and finalizing its products.
12. As is intended by Resolution VIII.31, a ‘standing STRP advisory group’ on Communications, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) will be established, in order to:
 - a) provide advice to the Panel and its Working Groups on the inclusion of CEPA guidance with each of the guidelines and other materials being prepared; and
 - b) ensure that the CEPA implications of new guidelines and other reports being prepared by the STRP and its Working Groups are transmitted to the Convention’s CEPA networks.
13. Wetlands International’s CEPA Specialist Group shall be invited to act as the ‘standing STRP advisory group’ on Communications, Education and Public Awareness, and the Chair of this Specialist Group (or his or her delegated representative) shall be invited to act as the Panel’s expert “Technical Advisor” on CEPA issues.
14. If resources permit, the costs of each Technical Advisor for the delivery of their work should be covered.

III. Schedule and purpose of STRP and Working Group meetings, and process between meetings

15. The STRP will meet as a review panel twice in plenary during a triennium. The first meeting shall take place approximately six months after the COP, and the second meeting approximately nine months prior to the next COP.

16. Thematic Working Groups shall meet in workshop sessions twice during a triennium, resources permitting. The first Working Group workshops will take place approximately three months after the COP and the second workshops midway through the triennium.
17. At their first workshops, each Working Group, with the assistance of its Technical Advisor, shall:
 - a) prepare the terms of reference (scope, focus of the work, and the outline contents of any guidelines and other reports required) for each of the priority tasks identified by the COP within its work theme, in the form of a short project brief, and refine the detailed costs for this work;
 - b) identify an appropriate global expert for each priority work topic to take the lead in undertaking the work;
 - c) where necessary, and resources permitting, request the [Secretariat] to engage the identified expert under contract to undertake this work;
 - d) review other (lower priority) tasks in STRP's work plan (Annex to [COP9 DR2]), and identify if and when any of these can also be delivered during the current triennium; and
 - e) initiate consideration of strategic gaps and emerging issues for recommending to the Panel and Standing Committee for future attention under the Convention.
18. Thereafter, each Working Group shall develop and undertake its work largely through electronic communication, tele- and video-conferences, virtual forums and exchange networks. The STRP Support Service shall assist in establishing such mechanisms as necessary.
19. Work on each task should begin as soon as possible after the first workshops, in order for each Working Group to be able to submit a progress report, and where possible first outline drafts of guidelines and other reports, to the first plenary review meeting of the STRP in the triennium. Full drafts of all materials for COP consideration should be available in advance of the mid-term Working Group workshops.
20. The first plenary meeting of the STRP in each triennium shall:
 - a) include an 'induction and briefing session' for all participants in order to ensure that they (particularly members appointed for the first time) are fully aware of their respective roles and responsibilities prior to making decisions on progressing the work requested of the Panel. The briefing will emphasize the role of the Panel in relation to that of the COP, the Standing Committee (to which the STRP reports), the Ramsar [Secretariat] and its STRP Support Service, and the STRP National Focal Points;
 - b) review and advise on any refinement of the approach, scope, contents and any available outline drafts of each priority task being undertaken through each STRP Working Group;

- c) agree the form to be taken by each STRP product, including presentation to COP as draft Resolutions and/or additional scientific and technical guidelines for COP approval, more detailed reviews and methodological reports for inclusion in the *Ramsar Technical Report* series, and other forms of product;
- d) review and advise on mechanisms for how and when to undertake each other task in the STRP's assignments approved by COP (Annex to [COP9 DR2]);
- e) identify key additional strategic issues for consideration by the STRP during the triennium and establish mechanisms for reporting these to Standing Committee and COP;
- f) develop mechanisms for reviewing the use and applicability of existing Ramsar guidelines and other tools;
- g) provide advice on each of the ongoing tasks of the Panel, including *inter alia*:
 - i) advising, when requested, on Ramsar site designation and management issues, including on Article 3.2 reports concerning change in ecological character;
 - ii) advising the [Secretariat] on requests from Contracting Parties for removing Ramsar sites from the Montreux Record of sites facing damaging change in ecological character;
 - iii) establishing and maintaining contact with STRP National Focal Points, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, so as to ensure that their advice and expertise are fully contributed to the work of the Panel;
 - iv) advising on any request from a Contracting Party to participate in the activities of a different Ramsar region to that which it is assigned under the regional categorization of the Convention;
 - v) at the request of the relevant Administrative Authority, ensuring the involvement of the STRP National Focal Point in monitoring and evaluating an SGF project;
 - vi) upon request, assisting Contracting Parties and bilateral development agencies in screening, developing and evaluating wetland projects;
 - vii) receiving progress reports and advising on future needs and developments of the Ramsar Sites Database, maintained for the Convention by Wetlands International; and
 - viii) ensuring cooperation, exchange of information, and coordination of activities, where appropriate, with other MEAs' scientific and technical subsidiary bodies (and their related processes), including through actions in Joint Work Plans;
- h) report to the Standing Committee on the STRP's work plan and deliverables for the next COP.

21. Each expert Working Group shall, as resources permit, meet in a workshop approximately nine months after the first STRP plenary meeting of the triennium in order to review draft materials, amend its parts of the work plan as necessary, and agree the steps to be taken for timely completion of its tasks.
22. Should the dates for the next COP be set less than three calendar years (36 months) after the previous COP, the STRP Working Groups shall review their workloads and agreed deliverables, and advise the Standing Committee of any proposed changes to the Panel's work plan.
23. The second plenary review meeting of the Panel shall:
 - a) receive reports from each of the expert Working Groups, including final draft guidelines and other materials;
 - b) review and approve finalization of these materials for consideration by the Standing Committee and COP;
 - c) identify any further work on each topic that it may consider is still needed, and make recommendations on this to the Standing Committee and COP; and
 - d) review the recommendations on key strategic issues for the Convention, and prepare these for consideration by the Standing Committee and COP.
24. The working language of the Panel shall be English. The ability of STRP members and invited experts to consult and use literature in other languages shall constitute an additional asset for their appointment.

IV. The roles and responsibilities of the Panel and its members

25. The Terms of Reference of the STRP and its members are to:
 - a) review the tasks and nature and drafts of the priority products requested of it by COP Resolutions and the Convention's Work Plan;
 - b) undertake strategic review of the current tools and guidance available to Parties and new and emerging issues for the Convention;
 - c) determine and agree a mechanism for the delivery of priority and other tasks assigned to the Panel, advise on which tasks it does not have the expertise or capacity to progress, and receive the advice of the Standing Committee for this work plan;
 - d) make expert review of the draft products in its work plan, taking into account the views expressed by STRP National Focal Points, agree any amendments needed, and transmit these revised products for consideration by the Standing Committee;
 - e) ensure, with the assistance of the Ramsar [Secretariat], that the work of the STRP contributes to and benefits from the work undertaken by similar subsidiary bodies of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);

- f) undertake, along with STRP National Focal Points, peer review of draft documents being considered for publication in the *Ramsar Technical Report* series; and
 - g) review and advise the Standing Committee on, as necessary, draft Resolutions with a technical content submitted by Contracting Parties for COP consideration.
26. In undertaking their work, members of the STRP should, as set out in the Terms of Reference for STRP National Focal Points (NFPs), establish and maintain contact with the National Focal Points in their region or subregion, with an agreed allocation of Contracting Parties to each regional member, in order to ensure that the views and expertise of NFPs is available to the Panel.
27. In undertaking their work, International Organization Partner (IOP) members of the STRP should ensure that their networks, including their expert Specialist Groups, are consulted on the work of the Panel and that their views and expertise is available to the Panel.
28. STRP members should, as resources permit, participate in meetings of the COP and Standing Committee.

V. The role of STRP expert Working Groups and their Leads

29. Terms of Reference for expert Working Groups established under the STRP are:
- Under the guidance of the Working Group Lead (or Co-leads), to:
- a) prepare a work plan for the Working Group priority and other tasks as identified by COP Resolutions, including scoping the structure and contents of any guidelines and reports and proposing a mechanism and timeframe for their delivery;
 - b) review draft materials prepared under this work plan and advise on any necessary revisions, amendments, or further work; and
 - c) advise the Panel when the Working Group's scientific and technical work on the guidelines and reports is complete, so that the materials can be recommended by the Panel to the Standing Committee for consideration.
30. The role and responsibilities of a Working Group Lead are to oversee and guide the work of the expert Working Group in order to ensure timely review and delivery of its products, including through electronic networking and chairing of any Working Group workshop. In undertaking this role the Working Group Lead will work closely with the STRP Chair or Vice-Chair and keep the Chair or Vice-Chair advised on progress.
31. Appointment of Leads of Working Groups will be made by the Chair of the STRP with the assistance of the [Secretariat] at the first workshop meeting of the Working Groups in the triennium. A Working Group Lead need not necessarily be an STRP member, but could also come from an observer organization or from among the invited experts.

32. A Working Group Lead should have proven international expertise in the theme of the Working Group and, ideally, previous experience of the *modus operandi* of the Convention and its bodies and the nature of the scientific and technical materials required by the Convention.
33. Where a Working Group theme continues in the STRP work plan for more than one triennium, its Lead or Co-lead may, as appropriate, be appointed for a further term.
34. Working Group Leads should be prepared to represent the Panel in contributing to the work of equivalent expert working groups or other mechanisms established by other MEAs on similar topics. Working Group Leads should recognize and confirm the acceptance of such potential time commitments at the time of their appointment.

VI. The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair of STRP

35. The post of Vice-Chair of the STRP has been created to provide support to the Chair.
36. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP will be either regional members of the Panel appointed by the Standing Committee or the designated representative of an IOP member of the Panel.
37. The Vice-Chair should not be a regionally appointed member of the Panel from the same Ramsar region as the Chair; if the elected Chair is a designated representative member of an International Organization Partner, the Vice-Chair should be a regional Panel member.
38. The Chair and Vice-Chair must have the agreement of their institutions that they may devote sufficient work time during the triennium to permit fulfillment of their roles and responsibilities.
39. Upon election, the Chair and Vice-Chair will agree the division of responsibilities in relation to:
 - a) oversight of the different thematic areas of work of the Panel, as agreed by the Panel; and
 - b) representation of the Panel at meetings of other MEAs and other scientific and technical initiatives of interest to the Convention.
40. The Terms of Reference of the Chair of STRP are to:
 - a) chair the meetings of the Panel;
 - b) prepare, with the assistance of the [Secretariat], the agenda, draft STRP work plan, and other papers for presentation to each meeting of the STRP;
 - c) appoint, with the assistance of the [Secretariat], the Lead or Co-leads for each expert Working Group under the Panel;
 - d) maintain contact with the leads of each expert Working Group established under the Panel and others leading on the preparation of materials for review by the Panel,

and, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, ensure that progress is in accordance with the agreed work plan of the Panel;

- e) report to the meetings of the Standing Committee on progress by the Panel on its tasks, and advise on any substantial modifications to the work plan;
 - f) report to the Standing Committee on the progress, achievements and recommendations for future *modi operandi* of the Panel during the next triennium;
 - g) make recommendations to the Standing Committee concerning those appointed members of STRP who should be invited to remain on the Panel for a second triennium;
 - h) make recommendations to the Standing Committee concerning the reappointment of organizations with observer status on STRP on the basis of their contributions to the Panel during the triennium;
 - i) represent the Panel, as appropriate, at meetings of equivalent scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, and report to these bodies on the work plan and progress of the STRP, particularly on themes of common interest;
 - j) represent the Panel, as appropriate, at meetings of other scientific and technical initiatives of interest to the Convention; and
 - k) in undertaking i) and j) above, delegate responsibility for such representation to the Vice-Chair, Working Group Leads or others, as necessary.
41. The Terms of Reference of the Vice-Chair of STRP are to:
- a) deputize for the Chair in undertaking the tasks and responsibilities as identified in the Terms of Reference of the Chair;
 - b) by agreement with the Chair, lead on ensuring the progress of specific thematic areas of the work of the Panel, as in 40(d) above; and
 - c) by agreement with the Chair, collaborate in representing the Panel at meetings of other MEAs and other scientific and technical initiatives.
42. If resources permit, the costs of the Chair and Vice-Chair in undertaking these roles should be covered, regardless of their country of origin.

VII. The role of observer organizations

43. The primary role of observer organizations is to bring technical and scientific review capacity on their topics of expertise to the review work of the Panel. However, given the lead technical prowess of such organizations, it can be appropriate that a member or members of their networks take the lead in the role of an 'invited expert' to undertake drafting work for the Panel.

44. STRP observer status shall be a consistent mechanism for engaging the involvement of all scientific and technical organizations with which the Convention develops formal collaborative agreements.
45. The Panel and its Working Groups may request that representatives of other relevant scientific and technical organizations be invited as observers to STRP, as they deem necessary, in order to increase the capacity of the Panel in specific subject areas on which it is requested to work.
46. Each observer organization shall identify to the Chair of the STRP and the [Secretariat] a named representative who will participate in the meetings and work of the Panel. An observer organization should be prepared to participate in all Panel meetings and relevant Working Group workshops during a triennium and should send the same representative to these meetings, if possible.
47. At each COP, with the advice of the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair, a Resolution concerning the STRP will list the observer organizations to be invited to participate in the STRP work during the succeeding triennium.

VIII. The role of the Standing Committee

48. The STRP is responsible to the Standing Committee in undertaking its work. The role of the Standing Committee is to:
 - a) at its first meeting of the triennium, appoint the members of the STRP, according to the proportional representation established in Resolution VII.2 concerning regional representation and membership from countries other than those appointed to the Standing Committee, appointing such members for their appropriate scientific and technical knowledge to participate as individuals and not as representatives of their countries of origin, and taking into account the recommendations of the STRP Chair concerning the reappointment of members from the previous triennium;
 - b) at its first meeting of the triennium, appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair of the STRP. Where possible, the Chair should have served as a member of the Panel during the previous triennium, so that she or he will have a working knowledge of the operations of the Panel;
 - c) at its first meeting of the triennium, review and advise on the priority and other tasks identified by COP for the STRP;
 - d) approve, by circulation, the work plan prepared by the STRP and its Working Groups;
 - e) at each subsequent meeting of the Standing Committee, receive a report on progress from the Chair of the STRP, and approve any proposed changes to the STRP work plan;
 - f) approve for consideration by the meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties the guidelines, reports and draft Resolutions prepared by the STRP; and

- g) approve for consideration by the meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties a Resolution concerning the STRP listing the observer organizations invited to participate in the STRP in the next triennium.

IX. The role of the Ramsar [Secretariat] and the STRP Support Service

49. The role and responsibilities of the [Secretariat] in relation to the STRP are to:

- a) prepare and make logistical arrangements for STRP meetings;
- b) assist the Chair of the STRP in preparing draft agendas and other materials for STRP and related meetings;
- c) advise and brief the Chair on matters of conduct and process of the Panel;
- d) provide scientific and technical assistance to the Panel's work and its progress, including through the maintenance of the STRP Support Service;
- e) at the request of the Panel and its Working Groups, and as resources permit, establish contractual arrangements with expert consultants to prepare draft materials for the priority work of the Panel;
- f) review and advise the Chair and Panel on the materials it prepares so as to ensure that these are consistent with the expectations of the Contracting Parties and of a style and length consistent with current Convention practice;
- g) advise the Standing Committee on these matters;
- h) maintain the operations of the STRP Support Service;
- i) identify, through the STRP Support Service, costs of preparing each substantive task identified for the work of the Panel, and in the light of priorities for tasks established by the COP and Standing Committee, advise the Standing Committee on which tasks cannot be undertaken without additional resources, and seek such resources, as necessary; and
- j) provide an 'induction and briefing session' for all STRP participants during the first meeting of the Panel in each triennium in order to ensure that they are aware of their respective roles and responsibilities prior to making decisions on progressing the work requested of the Panel, as well as of the role of the Panel in relation to that of the Standing Committee to which the STRP is responsible.

50. The role of the STRP Support Service is to:

- a) establish improved links with, and knowledge of, existing expert networks operated by the Convention (STRP National Focal Points, CEPA National Focal Points, etc.), IOPs, and other organizations with observer status to STRP and/or with which the Convention has developed links;

- b) further develop and build the capacity of the network of STRP National Focal Points and their within-country expert networks;
 - c) identify gaps in expert network coverage in relation to the STRP's work, and seek to fill those gaps through identification and establishing linkage with other existing networks and the establishment of new networks as appropriate;
 - d) advise the STRP on appropriate experts from these networks to contribute to the work of the STRP;
 - e) support the work of expert Working Groups and other mechanisms established by the STRP; and
 - f) establish and maintain electronic communication mechanisms to support the work of the STRP and its Working Groups intersessionally.
51. The STRP Support Service will be operated within the role of the Ramsar Secretariat and will work in an open and transparent partnership with all International Organization Partners, STRP observer organizations, and others as appropriate.

X. The role of National Focal Points

52. The Terms of Reference of STRP National Focal Points, as approved by the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee, are retained (Annex 1), with the addition that:
- a) upon appointment by the Administrative Authority a National Focal Point should complete and return a short questionnaire (to be developed by the [Secretariat]) in order to identify and make accessible his or her areas of skill and expertise relevant to the work of the Panel;
 - b) STRP National Focal Points shall be invited to contribute to the peer review of reports and other documents being considered for publication in the *Ramsar Technical Report* series;
 - c) as and when established, STRP National Focal Points will be requested to assist in mechanisms for the collection and compilation of data and information for assessing indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention ([COP9 DR1 – Annex E]).
53. STRP National Focal Points shall, as far as possible, contribute to the work of the expert Working Groups established by the STRP.

XI. The process and criteria for the appointment of STRP members

54. Contracting Parties shall be invited to nominate candidates to serve in the STRP in each triennium at the time of distribution of the official documentation for the COP (e.g., three months before the opening of the meeting).

55. When issuing the call for nominations for STRP members, the [Secretariat] will, as far as possible, identify likely priority topics for upcoming STRP work, drawn from the anticipated COP Resolutions and ongoing responsibilities of the Panel.
56. When considering nominations for appointment, Contracting Parties should keep in mind that, under the terms of Resolution 5.5, members should have appropriate scientific and technical knowledge and participate as individuals, not as representatives of their countries of origin. Although it has become general practice that Contracting Parties nominate candidates who are nationals and resident in their country, it should be noted that nothing in Resolution 5.5 precludes a Party making a nomination of a person who is a national of that country but currently not resident in it, or indeed of a national of another country, if the Party considers that that person can contribute the necessary scientific and technical expertise to the work of the Panel - since appointed members participate as individuals and not as Contracting Party representatives.
57. Nominees for appointment should, as far as possible, have international as well as national expertise in their topics, and they must be sufficiently fluent in reading and speaking English to be able to participate fully in the review work of the Panel.
58. Nominees, at the time of their nomination, shall complete a short questionnaire provided by the [Secretariat] as part of the call for nominations concerning their experience and expertise, and also provide a declaration that they are able to commit the necessary time, including attendance at meetings, to fulfill their role as an STRP member. Nominees must confirm at the time of nomination that their institution or employer has agreed that they may commit the necessary time to the work of the Panel and indicate whether they will require financial assistance to attend meetings of the STRP and/or Working Groups.
59. The Standing Committee shall appoint the members of STRP from the list of candidates submitted by Contracting Parties as soon as feasible after the close of the COP, seeking to ensure that appointed members have expertise relevant for the delivery of the priority tasks identified in the STRP work plan.
60. Membership of the STRP shall be as established by Resolution VII.2 – i.e., the STRP shall have the same regional structure and proportional system of membership as the Standing Committee, as established in Resolution VII.1, and the members of the STRP ought, as far as possible, come from Contracting Parties different from those Parties elected to the Standing Committee in order to attain equitable representation on the STRP.
61. In the event that a vacancy for a regional member of the Panel arises during the triennium, the Standing Committee will review other nominees from the region and appoint a replacement member as soon as practicable, if necessary by correspondence should the vacancy arise between Standing Committee meetings.

XII. Continuity of Panel membership

62. In order to ensure continuity of expertise and working practices, approximately half the appointed members of the STRP should be reappointed for a second term, with reappointments being, as far as possible, equitable amongst Ramsar regions.

63. The Chair of STRP, following appropriate consultations with current members, will recommend to the Standing Committee at the end of the triennium the names of those members who should be considered for reappointment, on the basis of their contributions to the work of the Panel and the relevance of their areas of expertise to the priority tasks assigned to the Panel by COP. This recommendation shall apply to both regional members and the designated representatives of International Organization Partners. These recommendations will be transmitted to Contracting Parties at the time of the call for nominations for the next triennium.
64. No appointed regional member shall serve more than two consecutive terms.
65. Members being proposed for reappointment must have demonstrated a capability of contributing effectively to the review work of the Panel and have confirmed their willingness to be reappointed.
66. International Organization Partners should, as far as possible, designate the same representative as a member of STRP for consecutive terms for approval by the Standing Committee.

XIII. Continuity of STRP tasks

67. The COP should, in addition to confirming priority tasks and identifying in its Resolutions where it is essential that work required of STRP must be delivered to the next COP, as far as possible indicate ongoing work that should continue beyond the next COP.
68. STRP expert Working Groups on topics and tasks that will continue for more than a single triennium will, where appropriate, remain in existence for more than one triennium.

XIV. Harmonizing the work of the STRP and the subsidiary bodies of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

69. The Chair of the STRP, working with the chairs of the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, should seek to identify, in collaboration with the [Secretariat] and the secretariats of other MEAs, clear and agreed mechanisms for input and collaboration among subsidiary bodies.
70. In doing so, the [Secretariat] and the STRP should be involved and participate as much as possible in the mechanisms agreed by the MEAs under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and any other international process dealing with the synergies among MEAs.

XV. Resourcing the work of the Panel

71. In order to ensure that the needs and priorities of the COP can be efficiently and effectively met by the STRP, a budget for future STRP work should, resources permitting, cover:
 - a) costs of attendance at STRP meetings and Working Group workshops, as appropriate, by members from developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

- b) staffing and operations of the STRP Support Service operating within the Secretariat;
- c) drafting and finalization of substantive materials requested by the COP by independent expert consultants, as necessary, for review by the Panel;
- d) travel, subsistence and administrative budget for the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair; and
- e) costs, where necessary, of any expert Technical Advisors invited to support the work of the Panel's expert Working Groups.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for the STRP's National Focal Points

The Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) was established through Resolution 5.5 of the 5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Kushiro, 1993) to provide scientific and technical advice to the Standing Committee and the Ramsar Bureau, and through them, to the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Through Resolution VII.2 of the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1999), the composition and *modus operandi* of the STRP were modified such that the Panel now comprises 13 experts from the six Ramsar regions, designated by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, to provide advice in their personal capacity, and not as representatives of their countries or governments. In addition, the STRP has as full members representatives of the Convention's International Organization Partners, as well as observers from several expert bodies and other international environment conventions.

Through Resolution VII.2, the COP also invited all Contracting Parties to nominate a suitably qualified expert in each country to act as the Focal Point for STRP matters at the national level.

Upon appointment by the Administrative Authority a National Focal Point should complete and return a short questionnaire (to be developed by the [Secretariat]) in order to identify and make accessible his or her areas of skill and expertise relevant to the work of the Panel.

The following Terms of Reference were prepared by the STRP at its 8th meeting, held in Gland, Switzerland on 22-24 September 1999 and approved by the Standing Committee at its 24th Meeting on 29 November – 2 December 1999. At its 12 meeting the STRP recommended the addition of two other aspects of the contribution by STRP National Focal Points (included as items 10 and 11 below).

1. The main function of the STRP National Focal Point (NFP) in each country is to provide input, and support as appropriate, to the implementation of the Work Plan of the STRP, as approved by the first full Meeting of the Standing Committee which follows each COP.
2. In order to do so, the National Focal Point should, as much as possible, consult with and seek input from other experts and expert bodies in his/her country. The Focal Point is encouraged to use the opportunities of suitable national meetings, newsletters, e-mail, etc., to canvas the views of the expert community, and, when feasible, to organize expert consultations on key issues in the STRP Work Plan. The latter should be done in consultation with the appropriate regional member(s) of the STRP or Working Group Lead.
3. The input of the National Focal Point should be channeled, by preference, through the STRP member leading each thematic area of the Work Plan or through the STRP's regional representatives. When this is not practical, the input of the NFP may also be channeled through the STRP Support Service or the appropriate Regional Coordinator within the Ramsar Convention Bureau.

4. In general, the STRP network of National Focal Points will operate through correspondence, and as much as possible through e-mail. To this effect, the Ramsar Bureau will include the National Focal Points with access to e-mail connections in its list server devoted to STRP members. In addition, the Bureau will create a dedicated section in its Web site for the presentation and consideration of STRP matters.
5. Due to financial limitations, the main working language of the STRP and its network of National Focal Points is English. Nevertheless, the Ramsar Bureau will endeavour to translate into French and Spanish key discussion documents that NFPs could be particularly encouraged to comment on.
6. STRP National Focal Points in each country are expected to maintain regular contact, and endeavour to identify and undertake activities of common interest, with their equivalent National Focal Points of the technical and scientific bodies of other relevant international and regional environment-related conventions, and especially for those with which the Ramsar Convention has in place a Memorandum of Cooperation or Understanding, namely, the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Desertification, Migratory Species, and World Heritage.
7. The National Focal Points are also expected to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of projects funded under the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF), as may be required by the Ramsar Administrative Authority in each country and/or the agency implementing the project.
8. The National Focal Points should provide advice to, and participate in, meetings of the National Wetland/Ramsar Committee or similar bodies (Biodiversity Committees, for example) where they exist. They should also assist in disseminating information on the work of the STRP, interpreted as appropriate to the national context, to relevant individuals and bodies in their countries.
9. The National Focal Points should take an active role in supporting national wetland inventory activities and in supporting the efforts of his/her Contracting Party to implement the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.
10. STRP National Focal Points shall be invited to contribute to the peer review of reports and other documents being considered for publication in the *Ramsar Technical Report* series.
11. As and when established, STRP National Focal Points will be requested to assist in mechanisms for the collection and compilation of data and information for assessing indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention ([COP9 DR1 – Annex E]).