

Report of the Meeting

Thursday, 29 April 2010

1. The participants were welcomed by a brief recital by a Georgian traditional singing group.

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

2. **The Chair (Mr Kim Chan Woo, Republic of Korea)** expressed his gratitude to the government of Georgia for hosting the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) in such a wonderful country, and he noted that Georgia's efforts for the conservation of wetlands are truly appreciated. He observed that this is the first SC meeting in 15 years that has been held outside of Gland, Switzerland, except for those at meetings of the COP, and said that hosting by Parties presents a good opportunity to reach out to local people. He observed that, even with 38 new Ramsar sites since the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10), we are far behind schedule for reaching the Strategic Plan target of 2,500 sites with 250 million hectares by 2012. He urged that we need to do more, in terms both of designation of new sites and of management, and recalled that site designation entails responsibility. Six sites have been removed from the Montreux Record, and he looked forward to the day when there are no sites on the Record at all.
3. The Chair noted that developing the global green economy requires the support of the business community, with both its collaboration and its financial resources. The three-year interval between meetings of the COP is a long time in terms of building public awareness, and he urged that we must emphasize World Wetlands Day every year and take advantage of the outreach opportunities of the 40th anniversary events at the Ramsar Centre in Islamic Republic of Iran and elsewhere. He drew attention to the need for increased resources for the Secretariat and stressed the seriousness of the question of possible administration of the Secretariat by UNEP.
4. **H.E. Giorgi Khachidze, Minister of Environment Protection and Natural Resources**, welcomed the participants on behalf of the government of Georgia and emphasized the importance of wetlands, especially in this era of climate change and increased potential for natural disasters. He explained that Georgia is very rich in wetlands, with 26,000 rivers, 350 lakes, and 330 kilometres of coastline along the Black Sea. The transition to a river basin approach to conservation is a Georgian priority and a significant aspect of ecotourism development. Georgia is devoting special attention to the development of its protected area system, with the support of the international community. He thanked the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara for

hosting this meeting and wished the participants a successful meeting and enjoyable stay in Georgia.

5. **H. E. Levan Varshalomidze, Head of the Government of the Adjara Autonomous Republic**, welcomed the participants to Kobuleti and the Ispani Mire Ramsar site. He said that Adjara is the most dynamic region of Georgia and is presently enjoying an economic upturn. Adjara does not forget about nature, however, and does its best to make development decisions that avoid harm to the wide range of ecosystem types. The government makes every effort to protect the rich environment and its four protected areas play an important role in developing the major attractions of ecotourism, maintaining the traditions of the local communities, and encouraging scientific research. He was pleased that the meeting of the Ramsar SC will bring international recognition to Adjara's and Georgia's natural beauties.
6. **Mr Denis Landenbergue, WWF International**, welcomed the participants on behalf of the five International Organization Partners (IOPs) – BirdLife International, IUCN, IWMI, Wetlands International, and WWF. He reported that he recently returned from a visit to a Georgian wetland on a mountain plateau, soon to be designated as a Ramsar site, and displayed spectacular photographs of the site. He noted yesterday's visit to Georgia's two existing Ramsar sites and observed that there are plans soon to designate additional sites. He said that there are quite a few more wetlands that qualify for the Ramsar List, including some that meet the criteria for Transboundary Ramsar Sites, and offered WWF's support should Georgia wish to pursue the preparations for approximately 15 more designations for COP11.
7. Mr Landenbergue observed that the International Year of Biodiversity presents an opportunity for Ramsar to highlight the role of wetlands and, especially, the threats to wetlands as well, and he urged that Ramsar should continue to raise its profile with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), especially in the context of the inland water target. He suggested developing joint projects with the IOPs, including on Ramsar's contribution to the CBD COP in autumn, and welcomed the development of the new Joint Work Programme with CBD. He was convinced of the need to build stronger partnerships with the IOPs; whilst recognizing that each IOP has its own special character and priorities, he saw the need for a new model for cooperation, including clarification of the IOPs' role and what the IOPs can expect from the Convention, with an understanding of what the IOPs can and cannot do. One crucial aspect is through better cooperation from local and country affiliates on, for example, Ramsar Advisory Missions, for there is a wide range of IOP staff and expertise on the ground.
8. Mr Landenbergue welcomed the addition of a Partnership Coordinator for the Secretariat but noted with concern that the Ad Hoc Working Group has not yet reached consensus on the administration of the Secretariat, a continued uncertainty that places additional strain on the staff. He noted that IUCN has emphasized that its current administration and

IOP roles are separate and do not affect one another. He expressed the IOPs' renewed commitment to the Convention, and especially to wetland managers. He noted that 2011 is also the 50th anniversary of WWF and hoped to find ways to commemorate this joint birthday with Ramsar.

9. **The Secretary General** (SG) expressed his gratitude to Georgia for its time, financial support, and excellent organization of the meeting. He described yesterday's visit to the Ispani percolation mire, stressing the importance of peatlands in light of climate change mitigation, as well as the interdependence of forest and wetlands seen at the Kolkheti Ramsar site.
10. The SG welcomed Paraguay as Vice Chair of the SC and thanked the SC Executive Team for all of its help in the last triennium and this one. He recognized the Ambassador of Indonesia for her commitment in participating and the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group, Australia and Chile, for the WG's important work over the past 18 months. He expressed gratitude to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), which has enabled our input in many global fora, and expressed the STRP Chair's apologies for being unable to be present. He recognized the work of the CEPA Panel and alluded to Ramsar's special reliance on CEPA. He thanked the IOPs, especially for their assistance to the Parties on the ground, and thanked all of Ramsar's partners, including the Parties that have made voluntary contributions for specific work.
11. The SG also expressed his appreciation for the Secretariat staff and said that the Convention is fortunate to have a strong team of only 20 in Gland and one in Samoa. He introduced Ms Oana Penea, the new Communications Officer, and mentioned that Assistant Advisors Sofia Méndez and Cathleen Cybele are attending their first SC meeting. The staff work as a team, which is not always easy. The Ramsar Convention needs such teamwork and partnership at all levels.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

12. **The Deputy Secretary General** (DSG) suggested the reordering of two agenda items. **Chile, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group**, drew attention to the circulation of the Co-Chairs' draft decision for review before that agenda item.
13. The agenda, as amended, was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

14. **The DSG** distinguished amongst categories of observers. The Permanent Observers Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the IOPs do not require admission. He noted the presence of Contracting Party observers Australia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Indonesia,

Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Turkey, and the USA. There are no non-Contracting Party countries present.

15. Amongst other observers, the DSG recognized UNEP and UNEP CMS, the Black Sea Commission, and the Ramsar Regional Centres for East Asia, for Western and Central Asia, and for the Western Hemisphere, as well as REC Caucasus. Georgian observers include CENN, NACRES, Batumi Botanical Garden, WWF Caucasus, Javakhishvili State University, and Green Movement. CEPA Panel members present are Cecilia Gichuki, Esther Koopmanschap, Amy Lecciones, Melissa Marin, and Christine Prietto.
16. All of the proposed observers were admitted by consensus.

Agenda item 4: Report of the Secretary General

17. **The SG** drew attention to his report in DOC. SC41-17 and proposed to concentrate, not on the activities reported there, but rather upon where the Convention can go in the future. He made a PowerPoint presentation that provided considerable detail on the Secretariat's work in fulfilling a number of key roles, namely:
 - as one of the biodiversity-related conventions, actively working with the BLG, IPBES, and TEEB;
 - as an MEA that contributes to international environment governance and sustainable development, chiefly through the EMG and through efforts to input into the CSD and ECOSOC (requesting relevant Parties to help in achieving consultative status with ECOSOC);
 - in promoting people's livelihoods through wetland conservation and wise use, by working with major players like cities, the tourism industry, extractive industries, and agriculture decision-makers (explaining Ramsar cooperation on these issues with UN Habitat, the World Tourism Organization, FAO, and Parties like Mozambique seeking guidance on dealing with extractive industries);
 - in adaptation and mitigation of climate change, especially with regard to the efforts with IUCN and Danone to provide methodologies on how much carbon storage is provided by different wetland types and on when and how to restore them (noting the MOU with the World Bank to provide guidance in these matters);
 - as an MEA dealing with water, at the global, regional, and national levels;
 - on the interconnectivities between environmental law and human well-being, as for example in working with Stetson University College of Law in developing a collaborative law and policy programme for sustainable wetland and water resources conservation; and
 - promoting the spirit of the Changwon Declaration as key guidance for establishing priorities for future work.

18. The SG expressed the need to expand our influence beyond the existing Ramsar community and involve other important players.
19. **Switzerland** thanked the SG and Secretariat for their work in putting Ramsar into global fora. She gave a number of examples of extremely important recent achievements and expressed gratitude for the proactive work and outstanding direction of the SG and the whole team.
20. **Marshall Islands** thanked the SG for his outstanding work and conveyed Australia's wish for clarification on the relationship between the Partnership Coordinator and COP10's call for voluntary contributions or secondments. **The SG** replied that it was hoped that the Coordinator would help to work with other organizations in preparing joint proposals relevant to both Ramsar priorities and the organizations, too. The Secretariat does not presently have the capacity to work closely and influence strategy in designing proposals. The Coordinator will be a key position and will be related to developing voluntary funding as well; whilst it is true that one person cannot do all of it, he said that we must start somewhere and prioritize the tasks. He noted that for COP11 the Secretariat will present two budgets, one for the core and another for the voluntary funding needs, so that the Parties can see where we need help in achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives.
21. **Cameroon** suggested that the Secretariat could set up projects, including the IOPs, with the CBD on the three pillars of economic, social, and environmental issues, and thus raise the visibility of the Convention. **The SG** responded that we hope that the new position will help to develop such other possibilities, and he described additional ways in which the Secretariat is already collaborating with the CBD SBSTTA, with the objective of developing the Joint Work Programme beyond just inland waters and to coastal and marine ecosystems as well.
22. **Chile** expressed willingness to help in gaining consultative status with ECOSOC, which is a lengthy and difficult process, and asked for more information about what phase in the process Ramsar is presently at. The Secretariat should provide all the information possible to the ECOSOC-member Parties that might be able to help. Chile also noted that the lack of legal counsel within the Secretariat has been a matter of great concern, particularly to the Ad Hoc Working Group, and he urged that the COP should consider steps to remedy this problem. He said that it was a pleasure to hear how the Ramsar Convention is improving all the time and becoming one of the truly successful conventions in the biodiversity cluster.
23. **The SG** expressed gratitude for all helpful input into the ECOSOC process, since because the Secretariat has no source of legal advice it is difficult to understand these processes and provide the relevant information. He hoped that the next COP would seriously consider a number of options for filling this significant gap in the Secretariat's capacities, by

increasing the core budget to provide for legal advice when needed, for example, or by making secondments available either in Gland or from the home countries.

24. **Lebanon** noted that the SG's report did not include a mention of the recent Ramsar meeting in conjunction with the League of Arab States, which included 22 Arab countries, and asked that that and the Cairo declaration be added to the SG's report. He suggested that it would be beneficial for a better implementation of the Convention in the Arab region to consider the possibility of having a programme officer for the Arab region at the Secretariat. **The DSG** noted that amending existing SC documents can be messy but we could reflect that point in an addendum to that document placed near it in the permanent record on the Web site.
25. **China** reported that the Chinese government has carried out many conservation works and has achieved great results; for example, in 2009 the Hangzhou Xixi Wetland in China was successfully designated as a Ramsar site, and China's first wetland cultural festival and the 3rd International Wetlands Forum was held in Hangzhou, which made a great contribution to the conservation and management of wetlands. The Senior Regional Advisor for Asia/Oceania also participated in that meeting.
26. **The Chair** summarized the five key points that have come out of the discussions and phrased them in terms of a draft decision.

Decision SC41-1: The Standing Committee warmly welcomed the Secretary General's report and took note of the accomplishments included in the report and mentioned in the discussion; requested the Secretariat to report back to the SC on progress in the matters raised; requested the Secretariat to continue developing its important strategic partnerships with the international organizations; asked the Secretariat, given the importance of climate change issues, to continue providing input in appropriate fora so that the Ramsar Convention will be an important player in that context; and requested the Secretariat to provide relevant information on the ECOSOC process for those Parties willing to help obtain consultative status.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Management Working Group

27. **The Chair** reported on the MWG's two meetings and brief report, noting the issues of improving the recruitment process for Secretaries General; other personnel matters, including visas for interns and other staff; and the Secretary General's contract, for which the MWG chose to go into closed session. On two of those matters, the SC adopted decisions in accordance with the MWG's recommendations.

Decision SC41-2: [This decision was subsequently revised and now appears as Decision SC41-37.]

Decision SC41-3: The Standing Committee urged the Secretariat, working with IUCN, to continue to seek as rapidly as possible a solution to the work permit problems with the Swiss authorities, and it thanked Switzerland for its efforts in helping to resolve these matters.

28. **The Chair** proposed that the SC should go into closed session to consider further the renewal of the Secretary General's contract. **Brazil** felt that Rules of Procedure 6 and 7 indicate that observers in the COP should take part in sessions unless 1/3 of the Parties disagree, and that these rules should apply to the SC as well. **The DSG** noted that Rules 6 and 7 relate to the admission of observers to the meetings in general, not to the conduct of business within the meetings themselves. Rules 29.1 and 29.2 indicate that the COP, and therefore the SC, should meet "in public" unless the voting SC members should choose otherwise. That is the prerogative of the SC members to decide.
29. **The Chair** proposed that the closed session would report on the status of the matter so far and would be open to SC members and Contracting Party observers. Thereafter, following consultations on the way forward, the SC will decide how to proceed at a subsequent session.
30. **Chile** felt that the matter could not be resolved without a legal advisor but noted that it is for the voting members of the SC, and not for the Chair, to decide whether to go into closed session. He noted that there is a lacuna in the Rules of Procedure between permanent and other kinds of observers. **Cameroon** agreed that it would be dangerous to overstep the boundaries of Rule 29, which gives the authority to the Committee, not to its Chair. **The DSG** agreed that it is for the Chair to propose and the Committee to decide. **Brazil** requested the Standing Committee to vote on whether Observer Parties can participate in this discussion or not.
31. **The Chair** felt that, since the matter concerns all Parties, the distinction between voting members and observers is only relevant when and if it is time to take a vote. He hoped to avoid that kind of situation.
32. The Standing Committee went into a closed session of voting members and Observer Parties only.

Agenda item 14: Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform

33. **The Chair** introduced the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc WG, Ms Miranda Brown (Australia) and Mr Osvaldo Alvarez (Chile).
34. **Co-Chair Chile** thanked the SC for inviting the Co-Chairs to report on the work of the Ad Hoc WG. He summarized the Convention's work on the status of the Secretariat since

SC34 (2006) and described the WG's mandate as established in Resolution X.5 (2008). He briefly characterized each of the WG's five meetings since January 2009:

- 1) development of a work plan
- 2) agreement on letters and questionnaires for IUCN and UNEP
- 3) discussion of IUCN and UNEP responses to the questionnaires and the consultant's report on them
- 4) discussions of questions raised by the delegations, and comparisons of cost estimates
- 5) drafting of WG's report and recommendation to the Standing Committee,

noting that the meetings had the benefit of resource persons from UNEP, IUCN, and the legal consultant, Mr Kofi Addo.

35. **Co-Chair Chile** reported that after a review of all of the information collected, the delegations could not reach consensus (cf. the recommendation at the end of the WG's report). A large majority concluded that there was sufficient evidence that the Secretariat could be more efficiently hosted by UNEP, but several states concluded that there was not sufficient evidence at this time and that the Secretariat should continue to be hosted by IUCN. He felt that countries were divided on interpretation but that the evidence was there. The purpose of the exercise was to enhance the image and implementation of the Convention, so that it could play a greater role in international environmental governance.
36. **Co-Chair Australia** reported that the WG was well-attended by Contracting Parties, either from the missions to the UN in Geneva or from the capitals. She said that the Co-Chairs' draft decision is an attempt to chart the way forward – mindful of the fact that some Parties will wish to pursue this issue at COP11, the Co-Chairs felt that it would be unfair to go to the COP without the additional required information, so they identified those issues that would most need to be further clarified. In sum, the idea is that the WG should continue its work. The Co-Chair added a technical amendment to the draft decision to the effect that to “majority of states” should be added “at the Working Group”.
37. There was a round of applause for the efforts of the two Co-Chairs over the past 18 months.
38. **The USA** wished to place the following statement on the record:

The United States actively participated in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform and listened with interest to the different views and presentations throughout the five meetings of the Group. In our view it is time to move beyond these discussions to allow the Convention to focus again on its mission: the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

We do not support a change in hosting arrangement for the Convention's Secretariat and continue to believe that the best scenario for the Ramsar Secretariat is to maintain the arrangement with IUCN as the host institution. We believe strongly that it remains the responsibility of Parties to implement their obligations effectively under the Convention. Simply moving Ramsar to UNEP will not remedy a lack of commitment from Contracting Parties. We remain unconvinced that the assumed increase in recognition of the Convention under a UNEP arrangement overrides the expected cost increases or the uncertainty with respect to operational flexibility and efficiency, which thus far have made the Convention a particularly effective organization, committed to on-the-ground action and achieving improved management of wetland resources.

We do not support a recommendation by the Standing Committee for a change in hosting arrangement. Clearly, as evidenced by the split views presented throughout the Working Group's discussions, there is no consensus among Parties to make such a change. This issue is of great significance to the Convention and is precisely the sort of change for which consensus is particularly important. We respectfully request the Standing Committee to recognize this lack of consensus in their recommendation [and/or] report going forward to the Conference of Parties on this issue, and that some governments firmly oppose a change in the hosting arrangement.

39. Following that statement, the USA continued that the Convention needs flexibility, creativity, and adaptability as it faces the future. Overconnected systems with high levels of inertia do not work as well as adaptive and innovative entities. He listed a considerable number of Ramsar innovations that were in place well before the other bodies and stressed the dangers of absorption into a large system. Ramsar operates on a lean budget, and additional costs might well undermine the levels of service provided. He felt that the SG's report demonstrates that the present situation works well.
40. **The Czech Republic** read for the record a statement from the UK:

The UK would like to express its gratitude to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform for its hard work on a difficult issue. Given the group's efforts, it is however disappointing that the evidence obtained on costs and benefits was not sufficient to enable the Group to reach a consensus, and thus no firm recommendations for Standing Committee could be reached.

The UK's view remains that, in order to justify the likely substantial increase in annual contributions for some Parties (the rise in UK's annual contributions is estimated to be in the region of between 9% and 26%), the benefits arising from a move to UNEP must be tangible and significant. We have seen no evidence that this would be the case.

The UK therefore strongly supports the view that the Secretariat should continue to be hosted under IUCN.

41. **The Marshall Islands** agreed that more study is needed and urged a more careful study of the potential financial and human costs.
42. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** felt strongly that the current situation was not satisfactory for all Parties and that there are problems with the Convention's visibility, efficiency, and presence in other environmental fora. Referring to the Co-Chairs' draft decision, he noted that the first paragraph does not say anything about expected benefits, only about the financial aspects, and he felt that it would be premature to instruct the WG to draft a Resolution for COP11; he suggested that paragraph 2 should be omitted until after sufficient new information had been obtained.
43. **Japan** reported that it had participated in the five WG meetings and had supported remaining with IUCN, as there was insufficient evidence that moving to UNEP would have advantages financially, for example, in the cost of the transition and further discussion would be needed. There were possibilities that the quality of the Secretariat's services would be decreased by moving. Japan suggested a textual amendment to the draft decision.
44. **Paraguay** reported that Argentina had asked for its view to be reported, to the effect that the WG has not presented a consensus on the issue and that therefore the Standing Committee should take note of the WG's report, provide no new mandate, and allow open discussion of the matter at COP11. Argentina noted that most countries present at the WG meetings did not express any opinion at all.
45. **Paraguay** also reported its own view in favor of administration by UNEP.
46. **Mauritius** noted that there would be cost implications in moving to UNEP and wished to know what added benefits would be achieved for any added costs. He felt that more work needs to be done.
47. **Switzerland** favored the UNEP option and noted that under the International Environmental Governance and the confirmation in Bali at the last UNEP Governing Council of the process towards the clustering of biodiversity conventions, being under UNEP would put the Ramsar Convention on an equal footing with the other conventions. Switzerland agreed with the draft decision as it is, including the mandate for the WG to develop a draft Resolution (DR) as a roadmap. There is a need to prepare for a full discussion at COP11, and Switzerland is willing to continue its participation.
48. **Germany** supported the draft decision and felt that UNEP opens new possibilities, more flexibility, enhanced opportunities, and that moving to a stronger institution could lead to a stronger convention. The Co-Chairs' draft decision concretizes the mandate further in order to inform the discussion at the COP. He felt that Resolution X.5 mandates a WG

recommendation on a DR, and without such a DR an open discussion at the COP could be unmanageable.

49. **The DSG** pointed out that Article 8.1 of the Convention makes it clear that the COP needs to choose any new host by 2/3 of all Parties (not just those present and voting). He noted that Ramsar is a UN-recognized treaty, and that it is the administration of the Secretariat that is at issue, not the treaty itself. He observed that other environmental conventions, such as CMS, World Heritage, and CITES, are also not among the Rio conventions.
50. **The representative from UNEP**, who is the coordinator within UNEP for dealing with conventions, noted that experience shows that environmental conventions cannot achieve their objectives on their own; they require consistent governance and must work together, supporting one another in order to involve more sectors. The best way to achieve synergies is on an equal basis. He has read the WG's documentation and can see how some of the problems could easily be solved under UNEP, as for example the ECOSOC issue. He felt that within the UN family there could be other potential sources of funding, including GEF. He explained that the cost figures that UNEP has provided to the WG are the most conservative scenarios and that additional savings might be achieved through negotiations. These can be developed further when negotiations are launched. He said that the coming two years will be very important ones for the biodiversity conventions.
51. **Kenya** observed that during COP10 there was a real sense of a need for greater visibility for Ramsar, and said that we could achieve that through UNEP. Governments don't take Ramsar seriously under an NGO and give it a low priority when, for example, paying contributions.
52. **The SG** expressed his thanks to all the Parties involved in the WG's work and especially to Australia for providing the voluntary funding to allow progress.
53. **China** wished to have the following statement in the record: "China would like to support the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention to strive for its legal status and prioritize the improving of the overall status of the Convention and the status of the Contracting Parties in the international community. To better coordinate with other environment-related conventions such as CBD and CITES, we would like to suggest the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention to apply to join the UN system."
54. **The Chair** summarized that some members favor moving towards the UN system whilst some are hesitant or against doing so. There is no objection to seeking more information and a common understanding, and there is no opposition to extending the WG's mandate with the addition of a mention of added benefits. Concerning the mandate for a draft Resolution text, that could be softened or considered again at the next SC meetings.

55. **The Marshall Islands** conveyed the message that Australia is willing to have any remaining funds from its contribution to the WG be used for its continuing work.
56. **The DSG** proposed that the mention of a DR mandate could be kept open, such that in light of the findings of the WG's additional work the SC could decide at SC42 how to proceed with a draft Resolution. **Germany** felt that any proposal for amending the draft decision should come from Parties or the Chair, not from the Secretariat. He felt that it would not be a good idea to have the SC drafting the DR but rather that the experts at the WG should do so, with brackets when necessary.
57. **The SG** confirmed that anything that the Secretariat suggests is merely advice to the Parties as only the Parties can make the decisions.
58. **WG Co-Chair Chile** felt that the phrase "in light of the findings" limits any DR to those points alone and ignores the rest of the work previously done by the Group. There would be no problem for the WG to come to SC42 with a DR for the SC to consider. **Co-Chair Australia** reported that great care was taken in drafting the decision and asked the SC Chair to ascertain whether the draft would not be acceptable as it is, with the two small amendments mentioned.
59. **Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that, having received the draft decision only this morning, there has been insufficient time to consult capitals, but in order not to block consensus, he agreed to let the DR mandate in paragraph 2 remain, but suggested that the DR should be presented at SC42. **The Co-Chairs** supported that suggestion.

Decision SC41-4: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group and, noting that a large majority of states at the above Working Group concluded that there is strong evidence that a Ramsar Secretariat provided by UNEP would more effectively implement the Ramsar Convention and recommended that the Secretariat be hosted by UNEP, therefore decided to mandate the Working Group to:

- 1) **determine the concrete modalities for implementing a transfer of the Ramsar Secretariat to UNEP and in doing so to explore:**
 - a) **further options for reducing the costs of a UNEP-administered Ramsar Secretariat;**
 - b) **transition arrangements;**
 - c) **timing and a timeline for implementation;**
 - d) **the best possible staff arrangements; and**
 - e) **the added benefits to the Convention;**

- 2) **draft a Resolution including a plan for implementation of the UNEP-administered Ramsar Secretariat for consideration by the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee; and**
- 3) **in fulfilling its mandate, consider the importance of supporting and facilitating the Convention and serving the interest of the Contracting Parties.**

Agenda item 5: Roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee

60. **The DSG** explained that DOC. SC41-18 responds to requests for more clarity in SC matters, particularly with regard to Permanent Observers, concluding that though the Secretariat has not found any conflicts between the COP Rules of Procedure and the Resolution VII.1 (1999) mandate to the SC, there might be gaps that could be filled, as for example in the 3-month deadline for COP documentation and customary 1-month deadline for SC papers. He suggested that SC request the Secretariat to prepare a briefing paper correlating each of the COP Rules with SC operations, consider changing the role of the host country of the Secretariat from observer to voting member (without prejudice to the proportional regional membership), and consider whether the Netherlands should remain as a Permanent Observer, for historical reasons, in preference to the host countries of the other IOPs. He noted that the Netherlands did not express any opinion when asked about these matters.
61. **The Chair** summarized the issues as: do we need a briefing paper? Should we give full membership to the Secretariat's host country, in addition to the regional members? Should the Netherlands no longer be a Permanent Observer, or should the same status be given to the host countries of other IOPs as well? And should we ask the Secretariat to draft a DR on these matters for COP11?
62. **Marshall Islands** agreed on the need for a briefing paper and a DR and stressed that it should be in plain English.
63. **Croatia** asked for confirmation that full SC membership for the host country would have no impact on the proportional membership for its region. **The DSG** confirmed that and suggested adding that to the SC decision.
64. **Chile** pointed out that providing full membership to the Secretariat's host country would affect the overall relative voting rights of the regions.
65. **Switzerland** proposed a middle way, that it would keep its Permanent Observer without voting but with full access to, e.g., closed sessions, but would be eligible to seek election as a voting member if it wished to, with the right to go back to its Permanent Observer status afterward. She noted that Switzerland is not the depositary of the Convention.

66. **Paraguay** noted that Argentina and Paraguay feel that it is important to clarify the Rules of Procedure to allow Observer Parties to participate in closed sessions, but saw no problem with Switzerland's proposals and agreed that the Netherlands should no longer be a Permanent Observer.
67. **Jamaica** felt that IOPs should be Permanent Observers but not their host countries, especially as all host countries if they are Parties can be non-voting observers whenever they wish. Further, Jamaica expressed an acceptance of the Swiss proposals, especially if the Rules of Procedures are clarified inclusive of the mechanism to allow observers to attend closed sessions.
68. **The Marshall Islands** reported that Australia does not support full voting membership for the host of the Secretariat, as a sufficient case has not been made.
69. **The Chair** summarized that no one disagrees on the briefing paper, some disagree with full voting membership for the host country, there is agreement on Switzerland's right to be elected to membership, there is a lack of clarity concerning closed sessions, and there is agreement that it is not appropriate for host countries of the IOPs to be members.
70. **Chile** pointed out that Switzerland had made a specific proposal, which should be considered as stated. **The Chair** noted that the Swiss middle way is already present in the document, and that there is a need to consider the closed session matter further.
71. **Croatia** and **the Chair** suggested a need for legal advice on these matters. **The SG** agreed but noted that funding support would be required. **The DSG** saw no reason that these matters could not be decided by the SC's wishes but agreed that legal advice might be helpful. To Jamaica's question, **the SG** clarified that neutral legal advice should be sought only if the SC does not agree a decision. **The DSG** added that all such changes would need to be presented to the COP in a draft Resolution, so SC would have opportunities to consider the issues further.

Decision SC41-5: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a briefing paper on correlations between the Rules of Procedure for the COP and Resolution VII.1 on the Standing Committee and requested the Secretariat to seek legal advice on the questions concerning Switzerland's Permanent Observer status and potential election as a voting SC member. The SC felt that it is inappropriate for the Netherlands and other host countries of the IOPs to have the status of Permanent Observer.

Agenda item 7: Progress with preparations for COP11

72. **Romania, Chair of the Subgroup on COP11**, presented the report of the Subgroup meeting of 27 April, noting that the Subgroup's request for the text of the signed MOU

has turned out not to be possible just yet, as it must still be submitted to the Prime Minister for approval and will be provided to the Secretariat as soon as that approval is obtained. He provided a PowerPoint presentation with salient facts about the venue and host country and photographs of the venue. He indicated that 21 or 22 May 2012 to the end of the month would be preferred dates for the COP.

73. Romania reported that the Subgroup had addressed issues of the duration of the COP, the COP and World Wetlands Day themes, and the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award, and he provided the Subgroup's recommendations on those matters.
74. **The Czech Republic** noted that the dates of the 5th MOP of AEWA were meant to be decided after the Ramsar Convention had set its dates, but the **CMS representative** confirmed that the AEWA MOP dates have now been confirmed as early May at the request of the MOP host country, France.
75. **Brazil** reported that the dates of the Rio+20 Earth Summit will be decided in a few weeks' time, probably in its preparatory committee meeting to be held in New York next May, but will probably take about ten days in May 2012. **The DSG** explained that the Subgroup was aware of that and suggested that Ramsar's late May dates are provisional pending that decision.
76. **Mexico** clarified that it was Jamaica and not Mexico that had expressed an interest in organizing a pre-COP11 regional meeting. **Croatia** asked for confirmation of Canada's participation in the Subgroup on COP11, and Mexico indicated that discussions are presently underway with Canada on that matter.

Decision SC41-6: The Standing Committee decided that the date of COP11 should provisionally be set for the second half of May 2012, pending information about possible clashes with dates of other meetings.

Decision SC41-7: The Standing Committee determined that for planning purposes the duration of the COP should be set at nine days and that the structure of the agenda and other similar details should be the same as in previous COPs.

Decision SC41-8: The Standing Committee agreed that the theme for World Wetlands Day 2012 and COP11 should be linked and related to the broad theme of "Wetlands, Tourism, and Recreation", with the exact wording to be formulated at a later date.

Decision SC41-9: The Standing Committee thanked the Danone Group for providing the Evian Special Prize since COP7 in 1999 to accompany the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award, approved the criteria, procedures, and eligibility for the Award, and approved the calendar for the nomination and decision process.

Friday, 30 April 2010

Presentation by the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution

77. **Ms Nilufer Akpınar** of the Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution recounted the history and objectives of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (the “Bucharest Convention), which was signed in 1992 by the six riparian countries, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine, in recognition of the need to protect the Black Sea’s fragile and unique ecosystem so important to the lives of the people in the region. A Strategic Action Plan for the Protection and Rehabilitation of the Black Sea was developed in 1996, with assistance from the international community, and renewed in 2007. The Commission, which is the executive body, was established in 2000 with a dynamic Permanent Secretariat and a number of working groups and has the capacity to implement complex projects, coordinate and manage scientific studies, and carry out the other main functions of a secretariat. She described the long-term problems of the Black Sea area and the great potential for the future using the right methodologies. The Convention’s Protocol on Black Sea Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation (including the Sea of Azov) will enter into force as soon as Georgia completes its ratification procedures.
78. **The DSG** described the Ramsar practice for reviewing and approving the report of the meeting on the final day and drew attention to the draft report of the first day that has been distributed.
79. **The Chair** announced that the SC Executive Team is drafting the outcomes of the closed sessions and will make a report in due course.

Agenda item 8: Financial matters

80. **Finland, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, reviewed the report of the Subgroup’s meeting on 27 April and explained the Subgroup’s recommendations for the SC’s adoption. The first matter concerned the review of the 2009 core and projects income and expenditures and the current status of the Reserve Fund.
81. **The Marshall Islands** expressed support for the SG’s suggestion for allocating Reserve Fund resources for the services of a legal advisor.

Decision SC41-10: The Standing Committee:

- a) **noted the small core budget surplus for 2009 and approved the release of CHF 25,000 of the Reserve Fund to support additional anticipated travel costs during 2010;**

- b) noted with concern the continued decline in voluntary contributions and the increasing dependence upon non-Contracting Parties as a source for these contributions; and
- c) approved the Financial Statements for 2009 as presented in DOC. SC41-3, noting that these will be formally signed off by the auditors in May 2010.

82. **Finland** recounted the Subgroup's consideration of the new services agreement with IUCN.

Decision SC41-11: The Standing Committee noted the satisfactory progress with the implementation of the May 2009 Secretariat services agreement with IUCN.

83. **Finland** reported on the Subgroup's consideration of Parties in arrears in the payment of their contributions to the Convention. **The SG** announced that Mali has paid up 18 years of contributions.

Decision SC41-12: The Standing Committee noted the Contracting Parties in each region that have long overdue contributions, particularly those that have never paid since acceding to the Convention, and strongly encouraged those Parties to begin to address their arrears. The SC urged SC and Subgroup members to work with Parties in their regions to help them to resolve their overdue contributions.

84. **Finland** explained that, in the matter of the Secretariat's process and mechanisms for staff salary awards, the approach outlined in DOC. SC41-7 would apply to all Secretariat staff including the SG, but that any proposed salary award for the SG would be decided by the SC's Executive Team.

Decision SC41-13: The Standing Committee noted the staff salary awards process and requested the Secretariat to keep its implementation under review and report back to the Subgroup on Finance on this matter.

85. **Finland** observed that the Subgroup reviewed the proposals for the allocation of the core budget for 2010 (DOC. SC41-8), which remains unchanged from that approved by COP10.

86. **Cameroon** inquired whether the budget for 2010 has been based on means or on projects, in such a way as to show the planned activities included, rather than just budget lines, in order to reveal any gaps. After explanations of the triennial budget process, **the SG** clarified that those activities are shown in the accompanying Secretariat work plan. The gaps in the core budget must be filled by seeking additional voluntary funding, as for example for the work of the STRP and the Regional Initiatives. **The Chair** observed that, as with every international organization, the basic activities are covered by the core budget

and the additional objectives of the Strategic Plan and STRP work plan always require additional resources.

87. **The Chair** reiterated the two serious problems, that some Parties are in arrears in their contributions and that the level of voluntary contributions is declining each year.

Decision SC41-14: The Standing Committee approved the allocations of the 2010 core budget as presented in DOC. SC41-8.

Decision SC41-15: The Standing Committee thanked those Parties that have made additional voluntary contributions and noted the continuing decline in such contributions. The SC urged SC members and the Secretariat to redouble their efforts to find voluntary funding to support COP-mandated activities, including the work of the STRP, the Small Grants Fund, and Ramsar Advisory Missions, as well as for delegate support for COP11 and its preparatory regional meetings.

88. **Finland** noted the Subgroup's views on the proposal for a new budget framework for COP11 presented in DOC. SC41-10.

Decision SC41-16: The Standing Committee welcomed the proposals for a new budget framework for presentation to COP11 covering voluntary and in-kind contributions towards COP-mandated but unfunded activities, and requested the Secretariat to prepare indicative 2011 budgets on this basis for further consideration by the Subgroup on Finance and the 42nd meeting of the SC.

89. **Finland** summarized the SG's report on progress in engaging with the Global Environment Facility, and **the Chair**, stressing the importance of GEF availability, said that the main message of the recommendation is to continue to strengthen the Convention's relationship with the GEF.

Decision SC41-17: The Standing Committee

- a) urged SC members and other Contracting Parties to work with their delegations to GEF meetings to secure recognition of the GEF as a recognized funding mechanism for Ramsar and wetlands;
- b) requested the Secretariat to explore whether an appropriate process to achieve this would be through the preparation of a Ramsar COP11 draft Resolution recognizing the Parties' willingness to accept GEF as a funding mechanism for the Convention, under GEF focal areas including international waters, climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity, noting the Convention's role as lead implementation partner of the CBD for wetlands; and
- c) requested the Secretariat to explore the development (simultaneously or subsequently) of an MOU with the GEF on these matters.

90. **Finland** reported that the Subgroup learned that 29 Small Grants Fund project proposals were approved for 2009 but as of March 2010 there were insufficient voluntary contributions to fund even one of them. The project portfolio issued in late 2009 has attracted funding for four projects. It was estimated that to be efficiently viable the SGF would need an annual income of approximately CHF 500,000. **The Chair** again stressed the importance of voluntary contributions in this regard.
91. **WWF International** recommended that serious efforts to reactivate a well-endowed SGF should be a priority for the new Partnership Coordinator.

Decision SC41-18: The Standing Committee once again urged Parties and others to find ways to support the SGF and increase its capacity to fund more excellent projects.

92. **Finland** reported that the Subgroup reviewed the proposals in DOC. SC41-13 concerning allocation of funds for Regional Initiatives for 2010 and the accrual of any unallocated funds in 2010 for allocation under the same budget line for 2011 at SC42.
93. **The Chair** noted that, with the Convention's limited budget, it is difficult to support networks and centres for a long time, so they need to try hard to become self-sufficient within a limited time period.
94. **WWF International** provided additional information about the ChadWet and NigerWet initiatives. Both Lake Chad and Niger River Basin organizations have had recent changes of Executive Secretaries and key staff, and both initiatives have been approved, and interest to fund them has been expressed by a potential donor. He felt that the new Senior Regional Advisor for Africa would be able to reactivate relations with these initiatives.

Decision SC41-19: The Standing Committee approved allocation of funds for Regional Initiatives for 2010 as follows (in CHF):

i) networks

High Andean	22,000
West African coast	nil
Carpathian	37,500
Caribbean	32,000
American mangroves	25,000
La Plata river basin	20,000
Black Sea coast	nil
Total for networks	136,500

ii) centers

CREHO – Panama	23,643
RRC-CWA – Ramsar	60,000

RAMCEA – Kampala	40,000
Total for centers	123,643

Decision SC41-20: The Standing Committee approved the accrual of any unallocated funds for Regional Initiatives in 2010 for allocation under the same budget line for 2011 at the 42nd meeting of the SC.

Decision SC41-21: The Standing Committee approved the improved “Combined format for annual reporting and forward planning” by the Regional Initiatives, as presented in DOC. SC41-13, annex I.

95. **Panama** requested a change in the text of DOC. SC41-13, annex II, para. 2, to “In order to continue receiving resources in the framework of the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, you are”. This was agreed.

Decision SC41-22: The Standing Committee welcomed the model contract (“letter of agreement”) presented in DOC. SC41-13, annex II, used by the Secretariat to disburse annual core budget allocations to Regional Initiatives, which specifies the reporting requirements, subject to minor textual corrections and an amendment proposed by Panama.

Agenda item 9: Regional Initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Convention

96. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Europe** summarized the history of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, beginning with MedWet in the 1990s and the CREHO centre in Panama. Since that time the idea has gathered momentum, and COP10 endorsed 17 initiatives, 14 of which are now active, and adopted operational guidelines. Three further proposals are now ready for full endorsement. West African Coast provided only partial reporting and is considered to be under development. There has been no information about progress about Pacific Islands and that is considered to be on hold. The Himalayan Initiative was endorsed subject to agreement among the participating Parties, but in the absence of that agreement the money has been accrued for next year.
97. **The SRA for Europe** listed some of the lessons learnt: setting up a regional initiative takes time; it is important to establish robust governance structures and procedures; short- and long-term planning is crucial; annual work plans and evaluation of results are important; and minimal reporting is required.
98. **The Chair** drew attention to the three initiatives now ready for full endorsement: Black Sea Coast, Caribbean, and American Mangroves.
99. **Cameroon** explained the situation in central Africa where two initiatives were proposed, CongoWet and Wet Congo, when there should have been only one. He said that the

Secretariat assured the participants that a meeting would be held in Gabon in January-March 2010 to harmonize the two proposals and the SRA for Africa was asked to lead it. The participants were ready to fund the meeting, but there has been no response from the Secretariat about organizing it.

100. **The SG** confirmed that when the Secretariat receives a proposal from the region, with the approval of the relevant countries, it will be proposed to the SC.
101. **Cameroon** felt that it was clearly stated during COP10 that the Secretariat would plan that meeting. He indicated that the Secretariat should have done its work and that it is not up to the Parties to follow up. He noted that the region is not asking for financial support for the meeting, only technical support.
102. **The SRA for Europe** said that given the constraints and reduced capacity of the Secretariat, the Secretariat has done what it could, and he quoted from para. 6 of the operational guidelines adopted by Resolution X.6:

“The Ramsar Secretariat has no capacity to develop, coordinate or run regional initiatives; but it will endeavour to the best of its ability to assist them, including through mobilization of additional resources. The role of the Secretariat is to maintain regular links with the regional initiatives, to advise them, to make sure that global Ramsar guidelines are applied throughout the different regions, and that their strategic and operational targets are fully aligned with the Convention’s Strategic Plan.”
103. **The Chair** suggested that the Secretariat provide an informal paper for the next SC meeting so that the SC can see whether it wants to engage. **The SG** said that the Secretariat is willing to help but noted that it might be difficult to do so until a new SRA for Africa has been appointed.
104. **CREHO**, in the name of the Ramsar Regional Centres, expressed gratitude to the Convention’s Contracting Parties and the Secretariat for their support and expressed its interest in continuing that collaboration for the implementation of the Convention, and with the technical coordination with the Secretariat, to join efforts under its respective competencies.
105. **The Chair** summarized the elements of a decision to be adopted.

Decision SC41-23: The Standing Committee noted the Secretariat’s report on Regional Initiatives, endorsed the three new Initiatives (Black Sea Coast, Caribbean, and American Mangroves) as operating under the framework of the Convention, adopted the combined format for reporting and forward planning, and welcomed the model contract for disbursing annual budget allocations to the Initiatives.

Agenda item 10: Progress report on appointment of a Partnership Coordinator

106. **The SG** provided background on the process of defining the position, as outlined in DOC. SC41-19, and reported that the announcement has now gone out. He asked the participants to help to disseminate that announcement, which has a deadline of 30 May. The SC Executive Team will be involved in the selection process, and it is hoped that the Coordinator could begin work in August if possible. There have already been a significant number of applications.

Decision SC41-24: The Standing Committee took note of the Secretary General's report on the recruitment of a Partnership Coordinator.

Agenda item 11: COP10 outputs requiring action by the SC

107. **The DSG** noted that all outstanding COP10 items are covered in the SC41 agenda except for the matter of assessing progress in and midterm review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. He suggested that rather than establishing a parallel process of assessment and review the SC could accomplish that aim through the National Reports process for COP11. He noted that some disconnects had been noted in the Strategic Plan and these will be reported to SC42 for possible amendments to the Plan in a draft Resolution for COP11.
108. **The Chair** summarized the issues before the Committee and proposed language for a decision.

Decision SC41-25: The Standing Committee determined that assessments of the Strategic Plan will be included in the National Reports format rather than by using a parallel process of mid-term review. The SC requested Parties to put forward at SC42 information about their progress in implementing the Strategic Plan and any difficulties encountered, as well as any suggestions for amending the Plan in a midterm review at COP11.

Agenda item 12: Collaborative review with the International Organization Partners

109. **The SG** provided background on DOC. SC41-21, prepared with the IOPs, noting that most of the IOPs' activities at all levels are relevant to the Convention's aims. He said that the Secretariat is too small to work closely with all parts of the IOPs and he hoped that the Secretariat's relationships with the IOPs at the global level would be complemented by actions at the national and local levels, where the Administrative Authorities and Regional Initiatives could be very helpful. He congratulated the IOPs and expressed his commitment to working with them.

110. **The Chair** observed that the Convention has not yet fully tapped the potential of its collaboration with the IOPs.
111. **Marshall Islands** indicated that many Parties don't know how to tap the potential of the wide range of organizations that could assist them, and he invited the SRAs and IOPs to assist in matchmaking the Parties with potential partners.
112. **WWF International** said that the IOPs have high expectations that the Partnership Coordinator will have sufficient time to strengthen the relationships with the IOPs, and he urged that the proposed meeting between the IOPs and the Secretariat should involve all of the IOPs together rather than separately, preferably within the next 3 or 4 months.

Decision SC41-26: The Standing Committee noted the report on the relationship with the International Organization Partners and requested the Secretariat to provide a comprehensive summary of collaborative activities with the IOPs for SC42. The SC encouraged the Secretariat to hold a meeting with all of the IOPs as soon as convenient and report on the results to the next SC meeting.

Agenda item 13.1: Promotion and utilization of the Changwon Declaration

113. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Asia/Oceania** provided background on the purpose and evolution of the Changwon Declaration of key messages about Ramsar and wetlands that was adopted by Resolution X.3 (2008). He noted that the Republic of Korea is championing the dissemination and use of the Declaration and held a Changwon Declaration Network meeting in November 2009 in Changwon, where many good examples were discussed. Prior to the meeting the Secretariat, working with the Ramsar Regional Centre in Changwon, twice circulated a questionnaire to Parties on their use of the Declaration – the response has not been great, but some trends can be seen, as presented in DOC. SC41-22.
114. **The SRA** indicated that the meeting considered how better to implement the Declaration, through National Wetland Committees, for example, by raising awareness of it through presentations and articles, and by collecting case studies of work done in the spirit of the Declaration.
115. **The Chair** emphasized the importance of the Declaration for delivering key messages to outside stakeholders and disseminating them amongst other sectors, and he agreed that it would be a good idea to include indicators on the Declaration in the National Reports format, as requested by SC40.
116. **Switzerland** reported that the Changwon Declaration has been very helpful when drawn upon in bits and pieces for specific meetings. The Declaration is rather long, but selected paragraphs have served very well for specific purposes. She noted the successful fact sheet

on climate change prepared by the STRP before the Copenhagen COP and suggested that further fact sheets should be prepared for big meetings and should also include specific paragraphs of the Changwon Declaration as well as refer to the whole Declaration.

117. **The Chair** fully concurred, noting that the Declaration may be too long for many to read at meetings full of documents, and he suggested that short texts drawn from it, referring to the full text on the website, could be very useful. **The SG** agreed that he takes relevant parts of it for particular purposes, and noted that when he did that for UN-Habitat they went to the website to find the full text.
118. **The DSG** promised to transmit the comments on climate change to the Chair of the STRP and said that the intention was to do the same for other meetings, within available capacity. The Changwon Declaration was designed to be modular for use in this way.
119. **The Republic of Korea** pointed out that there will be another meeting on the uptake of the Declaration, prepared by the Regional Centre for East Asia, probably later this year, and he invited all to participate. He said that Korea would give its full support to disseminating the Declaration through the preparation of related fact sheets.

Decision SC41-27: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat and Contracting Parties to redouble their efforts to disseminate the Changwon Declaration by utilizing various ways and means, including the preparation of related fact sheets, at various levels of meetings. The SC encouraged the Secretariat and STRP to prepare concise briefing notes drawn from the Changwon Declaration for important meetings of other processes.

Agenda item 13.2: Secretariat work plan 2010

120. **The SG** explained that at the SC's request a draft work plan was circulated for SC comment in late 2009 and finalized by the beginning of 2010. DOC. SC41-33 outlines the Secretariat's actions under that plan since January 2010.
121. **Marshall Islands** relayed Australia's statement to the effect that Australia noted that the STRP midterm workshop considered the task element on third party Article 3.2 reporting and determined that it is not an STRP matter, but a matter for the Secretariat in dealing with the Contracting Parties. As such, Australia requested that the SC consider the inclusion of the development of guidance on the acceptance and processing of third party Article 3.2 notifications under strategy 2.6 of the Secretariat work plan 2010. Australia would welcome the opportunity to have input to the development of that guidance.
122. **The DSG** explained that the Secretariat has its own clear guidance for dealing with third party notifications and he promised to make that available to the Parties.

123. **Brazil** recognized the importance of the STRP and its work plan, but noted the difficulties in funding so many planned tasks, since there remains a significant shortfall between available funds and the estimated costs. She suggested that it might be better to focus on a few important goals among the many listed priorities in order to get concrete results. The STRP has produced a wide range of guidelines and it is time to see their application. That might also help to foster new funding for other STRP priority tasks for which sufficient resources are not available now.
124. **The representative of UNEP/CMS**, speaking on behalf of AEWA as well, described their close working relationship with Ramsar through an MOU and a joint work programme, now in the process of revision. She noted that to date the cooperation has been largely focused on waterbirds, but there are other species closely related to wetlands. CMS Parties signed a Gorilla Agreement in 2007 and are this year convening a meeting on elephants, both commonly found in the Congo basin wetlands. She reported that Ramsar and AEWA are working together on a number of projects, including the successful Wings Over Wetlands project and the Wetcop project for strengthening waterbird and wetland conservation capacities in North Africa. CMS has participated in Ramsar Advisory Missions to Tanzania and Mozambique and is pleased to be working closely with the Ramsar Secretariat on promoting synergies and coordination between the biodiversity MEAs and environment-related UN agreements.
125. **The SG** thanked the CMS for participating in the present meeting and promised to try to participate in important CMS meetings as a way of continuing the close collaboration between the two conventions.

Decision SC41-28: The Standing Committee took note of the activities undertaken since January 2010 on the basis of the 2010 Secretariat work plan and encouraged the Secretariat to continue using the work plan to inform its planning and implementation.

Agenda item 15: National Reports format

126. **The DSG** recounted the background to the Standing Committee instructions for the development of the National Report (NR) format for this Conference of the Parties and explained the principles upon which it has been set up. It is intended to be consistent with past NRs, in order to allow time series analysis, but with the new Key Result Areas added from the Strategic Plan, making it slightly longer than COP10's. He described the innovations incorporated into this NR form and noted that the CEPA Panel will be reviewing the format tomorrow. The timeline envisaged, based on COP11 dates in late May 2012, would be circulation of the NR form in January 2011, to be returned to the Secretariat in September 2011 for analysis.

127. **Marshall Islands** said that his country and Australia supported international efforts to harmonize and streamline reporting amongst the MEAs, and for that reason Australia recommended streamlining the proposed NR format to no more than the 66 indicator questions in the COP10 form, in order to reduce the burden on the Parties. He also supported inclusion of indicators on the Changwon Declaration.
128. **The Republic of Korea** noted that it was expected that the NR's indicators on the Changwon Declaration would be in line with the questionnaire and sought clarification as to why two of them are missing.
129. **The DSG** described the challenges of trying to include key indicator questions but not all possible questions, which was how the NR form grew so unwieldy in the past. There is an inverse relationship between the size of the NR and the percentage of returns submitted. For the Changwon indicators, as with other topics, a balance was sought that would provide a good picture without overburdening the respondents.
130. The DSG noted that all kinds of international efforts are underway to harmonize MEA reporting and said that a paper will soon be available on the necessary preconditions for such harmonization. Ramsar has a very high percentage of submissions, whereas the CBD and other conventions have much lower returns. The CBD has requested Ramsar to develop the reporting process for inland waters.
131. **The Chair** noted that it might be very difficult to reduce the indicators from 88 to 66. **Marshall Islands** expressed understanding of that problem, and **the DSG** promised to make further reductions if possible, whilst preserving the balance.
132. **The Republic of Korea** felt that it would be good to incorporate the idea of whether the Changwon Declaration has been used to inform national policies and decision-making.
133. **Thailand** said that, since the more than 80 indicator questions will be a burden for the Parties to respond to, the Secretariat should make the best possible use of the analysis of the National Reports to help the Parties better implement the Convention.

Decision SC41-29: The Standing Committee approved the draft National Report format for COP11, with the incorporation of any advice from the CEPA Oversight Panel, and agreed the timelines for issuing the format in January 2011 with a deadline for Parties' submission to the Secretariat of September 2011 (subject to confirmation of the dates of COP11). The SC requested the Secretariat to look for ways to reduce the number of indicators below 88 if possible and to revisit the questions concerning the Changwon Declaration.

Agenda item 16: Status of Ramsar sites

134. **The SRA for Europe** provided background to DOC. SC41-25, the annual update on matters concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance. He drew particular attention to the suggestion that the six-year updating of Ramsar Information Sheets might be more efficiently done by the Parties on a rolling basis whenever particular opportunities arise.
135. **BirdLife Georgia** drew attention to the circulated BirdLife document on three sites in Africa, the Lake Natron and Lake Naivasha Ramsar sites and the Tana River Delta, requesting that the SC take note of that information and that the Secretariat take steps to investigate and raise these issues with Tanzania and Kenya. He offered BirdLife's help in finding solutions and providing further information.
136. **South Africa** requested that the Verlorenvlei Ramsar site be removed from the list in DOC. SC41-25, as it is not facing any threats and is well managed. He reported that the Administrative Authority is pleased with the progress at the two Montreux Record sites and would soon initiate the process to remove them from the Record.
137. **Kenya** acknowledged the unique challenges facing Lake Naivasha and invited a Ramsar Advisory Mission to come there urgently. Kenya will discuss listing Naivasha on the Montreux Record if that would be helpful. She thanked the Convention for SGF funding for preparing Tana River for Ramsar designation and said that the RIS would be submitted soon.
138. **Iraq** reported that as a result of the scarcity of water and degradation of the Mesopotamian Marshes, the Hawiza marshes are being impacted by neighbors, and she invited the Convention to facilitate open discussion with the Islamic Republic of Iran to find a solution.
139. **Marshall Islands** noted that Australia has provided a thorough update to the Secretariat, which has been distributed at this meeting. Marshall Islands, through an SGF project, has prioritized making a national inventory of wetlands and would welcome international support for the scientific expedition that is planned.
140. Marshall Islands then presented to the Secretary General the RIS and designation letter for its second Ramsar site, Namdrik Atoll, to a round of applause.
141. **Lebanon**, which reported to COP10 on adverse changes to the Palm Island Ramsar site, announced that with generous international help, especially from Spain, the oil slick caused by the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006 has now been completely cleaned up. Full information will be provided to the Secretariat.
142. **Tanzania** thanked BirdLife for the information provided on Lake Natron and offered assurances that Tanzania is actively following the recommendations of the Ramsar

Advisory Mission. He suggested that in future BirdLife might consult with the National Focal Point before publicly releasing information that might be incomplete.

143. **The DSG** promised that all of these updates would be recorded in the report of the meeting and reflected in the next Status of Ramsar Sites update. Concerning requests for Ramsar Advisory Missions, he encouraged Parties to talk with the SRAs about these but reminded that the Secretariat has no budget for RAMs and must seek voluntary contributions. He offered thanks to Australia for its exemplary record of regular updates on the status of its Ramsar sites and invited all Parties to provide RIS updates whenever there are positive or negative changes at their sites.
144. **The SG** said that the Montreux Record is not intended to place blame on a country, but rather to recognize that there is a problem and that the country is committed to finding a solution. Only the Parties can place sites on the Record, not the Secretariat. He said that the Secretariat is aware that some sites no longer belong on the Montreux Record, and he urged the relevant Parties to take the steps to remove them.
145. **The Chair** suggested that in the annexed list of Parties from whom RISs or updated RISs are required those categories might be separated in future. **The DSG** explained that the Parties at the COP asked that the two categories should be put together, and he suggested that the list should be seen as a list of countries with whom the Secretariat is working on obtaining information.
146. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** offered its explanation of the problem experienced by Iraq at the Hawizah marshes and felt that the overall situation on both sides of the border is relatively good, better than when the site was designated in 2007. He said that discussions between the countries are continuing and did not feel that inclusion in the Montreux Record would be a logical step at this time. He further underlined the fact that this is not an exclusively bilateral matter between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, but rather a regional issue that needs to be addressed by all countries neighboring that region. He said that “the problem in Hawaizah marshland can only be tackled through collective effort and collaborative measures by all regional stakeholders, based on reaching a common understanding of the overall situation.”
147. **The Chair** summed up the discussion and provided wording for an SC decision.

Decision SC41-30: The Standing Committee took note of the Status of Ramsar Sites report in DOC. SC41-25 and urged those Parties identified in paragraphs 6, 8, 9, and 11 to provide the information requested as soon as possible. The SC requested the concerned Parties to take steps to remove their sites from the Montreux Record to the extent possible, and urged Parties to provide voluntary financial support to the Secretariat to send Ramsar Advisory Missions when they are needed. The SC

urged Parties that need to provide RISs or updated RISs to do so as a matter of high priority.

Agenda item 17.1: Report of the STRP Oversight Committee

148. **The DSG** introduced the report of the STRP Oversight Committee, as found in DOC. SC41-32, and described the purpose and nature of the Committee.

Decision SC41-31: The Standing Committee noted the report of the STRP Oversight Committee and recognized the invaluable efforts of the STRP members and their organizations that are providing *pro bono* and in-kind work. The SC expressed its gratitude to the governments of Finland, Norway, Tanzania, and the UK for their voluntary contributions to the work of the STRP.

Agenda item 17.2: Report of the Chair of the STRP and the STRP work plan for 2010-2011

149. **The DSG** made a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the key points of the report of STRP Chair Heather MacKay, covering an overview of progress, the results of the mid-term workshops, the priority issues, the proposed products, and the budget issues. (The presentation is available on the Ramsar website.) He highlighted the STRP's recommendations for its participation in COP11 and its budget requirements for progressing its priority tasks.
150. **Finland** noted with concern the anticipated shortfall of funding needed in 2010 for the High Priority work of the STRP of CHF 86,315 (para 9, DOC. SC41-26) and pledged 15,000 euros to these activities in 2010, especially for further work on restoration (STRP task 9.2). She urged other Parties to prioritise the search for STRP priority task funding. Finland also noted the surplus in the Convention's Reserve Fund (DOC. SC41-04) and requested that the SG consider using the Reserve Fund to underwrite the 2010 STRP priority task implementation, up to a maximum of CHF 50,000, so as to assure 2010 progress in this important area of the Convention's work.
151. **The SG** felt that there would be no problem in releasing up to CHF 50,000 from the Reserve Fund for the work of the STRP. **The Czech Republic** and **Croatia** supported the statement by Finland.

Decision SC41-32: The Standing Committee noted the report of the STRP Chair and endorsed the updated STRP work plan for 2010-2011. The SC approved the allocation of up to 50,000 Swiss francs from the Reserve Fund for the priority work of the STRP in 2010 and expressed its gratitude to Finland for its generous voluntary support.

Agenda item 17.3: Progress with ecological outcome-oriented effectiveness indicators

152. **The DSG** provided an update on recent progress by the STRP and its lead on this issue, Dave Pritchard, and reported that some of the initial outcomes are already being used by others, e.g., for the in-depth review of the CBD's inland waters programme of work, the CBD's Global Biodiversity 3 to be launched soon, and the 2010 Biodiversity Partnership. He urged the Parties to communicate to the STRP any information they might have on change in wetland area to advance the work on that issue.

Decision SC41-33: The Standing Committee took note of the progress on the development of effectiveness indicators.

Agenda item 17.4: Progress with the IPBES

153. **The SG** provided background to the IMOSEB and then IPBES process and described the input that the Secretariat and STRP have been making in that regard, with a view to finding a place for Ramsar within that process as an equal. He felt that IPBES could respond to the implementation of the Changwon Declaration and show that Ramsar has continued added value for the biodiversity cluster. The SG and STRP Chair will participate in the upcoming Busan meeting, which will progress the questions of whether and how an IPBES should be established and under what modalities it should operate.
154. **The Republic of Korea** reminded potential participants in the Busan meeting of the recent release of the working documents and logistical information, and urged them to make their hotel reservations as soon as possible.
155. **Marshall Islands** conveyed a statement from Australia: "Australia suggests that Standing Committee should establish clear expectations about the nature of the Convention's engagement at the 3rd meeting on the proposed IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). Any decision for the Ramsar Convention to support or engage with the proposed IPBES is a matter for the Conference of the Parties. Until such time as a COP decision has been established, the Secretary General and STRP Chair will only be able to provide advice to the 3rd meeting on the proposed IPBES about existing arrangements for integrating science and policy and any potential impacts on the Secretariat and STRP of engaging with such a platform."
156. **The USA** felt that it was proper to monitor the progress of that process but might not be appropriate to support its establishment without a decision by the COP.
157. **The UNEP representative** said that biodiversity is under crisis and there is a need to improve the tools and mechanisms for coping with that, on an independent scientific basis. He suggested that it would be inappropriate to impose political mandates when establishing such a mechanism, which should be solely scientific. He invited countries to

go to Busan with understanding and a willingness to compromise for the benefit of biodiversity.

158. **The DSG** pointed out that if the decision is made to establish an IPBES process, it is essential that it should speak to Ramsar needs, not just to the resolutions of one or another of the other conventions.
159. **The Chair** observed that the establishment itself will depend on governments' decisions, but if it is established, Ramsar should assure that it has an appropriate position. It would be unwise to await a decision from the COP because that might be too late.
160. **The SG** affirmed that he and the STRP Chair would not be presenting any positions, which is the role of negotiating governments, but rather would be presenting our Parties' views based on Ramsar Resolutions.

Decision SC41-34: The Standing Committee noted the information contained in DOC. SC41-27 and asked the Secretary General and Chair of the STRP to prepare a short briefing paper on the various options in the IPBES process.

Agenda item 18: Update on business partnership activities

161. **The SG** provided background on the principles and guidelines adopted by COP10 for dealing with the private sector and said that the Secretariat is being very careful of the reputation of the Convention, which can sometimes be difficult when working with the private sector. The Secretariat is not an implementer and has no activities on the ground, but can work with the STRP to provide guidance, based upon our existing guidelines, as in the case of restoration. There has been no action with any other business partnership until the Partnership Coordinator is on board to give it his or her full attention.
162. **The SG** noted that the Star Alliance "Biodiversity Connections" programme, with MAB, IUCN, and Ramsar, is providing 25,000 euros per year for non-staff travel.
163. **Ms Nathalie Rizzotti, the Programme Officer**, provided a PowerPoint presentation covering the history, objectives, and present status of the three main areas of work with the Danone Group: the Fund for Water (since 1998), the Fund "Ecoles de protection de l'eau" (since 2007), and the Fund for Nature, or DFN (since 2008). The presentation is available on the Ramsar website.
164. **The Programme Officer** explained the positive and negative factors of working with the private sector, as discovered through the experience with the Danone Group, and observed that, with Danone accounting for about 50% of our annual voluntary contributions, there is a danger of too much dependence upon one partner.

165. **Marshall Islands** congratulated Danone and Star Alliance on their support for the Convention and encouraged the Secretariat to seek additional partnerships in order to diversify the private-funding base.

Decision SC41-35: The Standing Committee noted the Programme Officer's report and acknowledged the very valuable inputs from the present partners. The SC requested the Secretariat to continue to seek to diversify its business partnerships and encouraged the Secretariat to further explore any new potential partnerships, with due consideration for the objectives of the Convention.

Agenda item 19.2: Theme for World Wetlands Day 2012

166. **Ms Sandra Hails, the CEPA Programme Officer**, recalled that the SC decided that the WWD theme for 2011 would be focused upon wetlands and forests, in the International Year of Forests, and with the 40th anniversary message built into that. For 2012, the SC has already agreed to link the WWD theme with that of COP11 and it will focus on "Wetlands, Tourism, and Recreation". It will provide a great opportunity to develop these issues for the Parties.

Agenda item 19.3: The Convention's 40th anniversary

167. **The CEPA Programme Officer** invited the Parties and others to celebrate Ramsar's 40th anniversary at ALL levels ALL year, as it will be a great opportunity for everyone to talk more about Ramsar at national, regional, national, and local levels. She outlined the Secretariat's planning for these events and encouraged the Parties to become involved. Suggestions have been offered for possible activities by the Secretariat, the National Focal Points and CEPA NFPs, the SC members, the IOPs, other NGOs and other partners. She introduced the new logo, which will be officially launched in about a month's time. Her PowerPoint presentation is available on the Ramsar website.
168. **Thailand** urged the Parties to use 2011 to designate forested wetlands for the Ramsar List.
169. **Switzerland** offered congratulations on the inspiring design of the logo.
170. **The Czech Republic** expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for making these preparations for the 40th anniversary in good time and informed that the Czech Republic is preparing a list of activities, including a national conference on wetlands and climate change in February. The Secretariat will be informed of this in May.
171. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** commended the Secretariat's efforts and the 40th logo and informed that the Islamic Republic Iran has decided to hold a commemorative ceremony – the SG has been invited and everyone will be welcome.

172. **China** thanked the Secretariat for its efforts and reported that China is preparing to hold a 2nd China Wetlands Cultural Festival in Wuxi and to carry out a celebration of WWD 2011 with posters and activities at parks, nature reserves, government departments, and NGOs. China will also continue the “Wetland messenger action” and will keep in close touch with the Secretariat about these events.
173. **Croatia** congratulated the Secretariat and suggested that an additional key message could refer to Ramsar as the oldest convention dealing with nature conservation issues.
174. **Paraguay** offered congratulations on the planning and the logo and said that it too will conduct some activities, and he invited the Parties in the region to support Paraguay as the central site for 40th anniversary celebrations in the region.
175. **Thailand** suggested an additional key message, that Ramsar is the most effective mechanism for protected areas.
176. **The CEPA Programme Officer** expressed relief at learning that planning is already underway in the Parties and urged the Parties to communicate their plans to her or the SRAs, in order to help build momentum.
177. **The SG** thanked all the Parties already taking steps and thanked Iran for organizing an international event in the birthplace of the Convention, encouraging all to participate. He invited the partners to celebrate with us and hoped for activities at all levels. He said that the Secretariat will provide as much support as it can and encouraged everyone to inform the Secretariat about their planning. He noted that the 40th anniversary would be an opportunity for all Parties to show their commitment to the Convention.
178. There was discussion of the form of words of the “oldest convention” as suggested by Islamic Republic of Iran and Croatia – **WWF** suggested “most experienced” convention instead. **The DSG** provided our customary wording, that Ramsar is “the first global environmental convention” and “the only convention that addresses a specific ecosystem”.

Decision SC41-36: The Standing Committee noted the preparations underway for celebrating the Convention’s 40th anniversary and encouraged the Parties to prepare for and become involved in 40th anniversary celebrations.

Agenda item 19.4: Report of World Wetland Week in Seychelles

179. **The SG** reported on the celebrations last February in Seychelles, in which all levels of stakeholders were involved in the planning and organization. Ramsar signed an MOU with the UN WTO to underline the dependence of tourism on healthy wetlands. Other countries are invited to host a similar exercise and the Secretariat can supply lessons learnt,

but hosting such an event requires commitment and plenty of time in advance. The invitation must come from the highest levels of the government, not from the Secretariat.

Agenda item 19.1: Report of the CEPA Programme Officer

180. **The CEPA Programme Officer** reported that the Advisory Board in the Netherlands was expected to finalize its capacity building framework by the time of this meeting, but because of the illness of one of the consultants, it will not be ready until July, after which time the Advisory Board will meet. The CEPA Oversight Panel has been working by e-mail but will have its first face-to-face meeting tomorrow, with the SC Vice Chair, Paraguay, as its Chair. There will be a full report for the next meeting of the SC.
181. **The DSG** recognized the Executive Assistant to the Secretary General, Ms Mireille Katz, for her 25 years of dedicated service to the Convention, beginning even before the establishment of the Ramsar Secretariat. He showed photographs of the celebration held for Mireille at the Secretariat headquarters and presented her with still more flowers on this occasion.
182. **Mireille** expressed surprise and appreciation for this thoughtfulness and explained that she had worked on the Ramsar budget whilst employed by IUCN even before the creation of the Secretariat. She thanked all of her many old and new friends in the Ramsar community.
183. **The DSG** showed humiliating photos of the former Communications Officer, Dwight Peck, in his “humble beginnings” as a part-time Ramsar employee in 1993, and now. Dwight has reached retirement age and has been succeeded as Communications Officer and webmaster by Ms Oana Penea, whilst he will continue part-time as Documentation Officer for rapporteuring, publications layout, etc. The DSG and colleagues presented Dwight with a fine mountain painting and a basket of Georgian beer. Dwight expressed his thanks briefly.

Saturday, 1 May 2010

Agenda item 6 (continued)

184. **The Chair** referred to Agenda item 6: ‘Report of the Management Working Group’ and explained that, following closed sessions of the Standing Committee, an amended text of Decision SC41-2 has been proposed. The amended decision indicates that the Standing Committee has decided, *inter alia*, to renew the Secretary General’s contract and to request the SG to implement a strategy to maximize synergies within the Secretariat.
185. There was discussion of whether the SG should be requested or mandated to develop such a strategy, but it was felt that “requested” would be adequate and more appropriate.

186. **Finland** encouraged the SG to make use of unused salary funds to implement such a strategy; **the Chair** indicated that the proposal is good. However, he would prefer the option of the SG's using the unused salary for Partnership Coordinator without it being included in the decision.
187. There was a round of applause for the renewal of the SG's contract. **The SG** thanked the Standing Committee and partners for their renewal of trust and stated his commitment to take seriously the concerns that had been expressed. He said that he would need the full support and collaboration of the staff and the SC, and promised that with the staff's commitment and skills the Secretariat would be able to respond to the SC's expectations.

Decision SC41-37: The Standing Committee

- a) **noted the Secretariat's recommendations concerning amendments to the past recruitment process for Secretary General;**
- b) **decided to renew the Secretary General's contract for another term;**
- c) **requested the Secretary General to develop and implement a strategy to maximize synergies within the Secretariat, and to report the outcome assessed by the Executive Team to the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee; and**
- d) **requested the Executive Team to improve the criteria and methodology for the annual evaluation of the Secretary General on the basis of, *inter alia*, the terms of reference for the post and the approved Secretariat Work Plan.**

Agenda item 20: Date and venue of the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee

188. **The DSG** observed that the Standing Committee must confirm the need for two full SC meetings in 2011 in preparation for COP11 and choose their dates and venues. He noted that if COP11 were to be scheduled for late May 2012, the optimum dates in terms of documentation preparation and lead times would be SC42 in May-June 2011 and SC43 in early October 2011. Fixing the SC dates must await confirmation of the dates of COP11, which will in turn depend upon the dates of the Rio+20 Earth Summit in Brazil and other factors.
189. **The Chair** noted that if COP11 should have to be held earlier, the results of the COP could be fed into the Rio+20 process.
190. **Switzerland** and **the DSG** pointed out that the World Water Forum will be held 19-24 March 2012 in Marseilles.

Decision SC41-38: The Standing Committee determined to hold two full SC meetings in 2011 and to agree the dates when the full picture becomes more clear, and it requested the Secretariat and Romania, the host of COP11, to propose COP11 dates as soon as possible for electronic approval by the Committee.

Agenda item 22: Any other business

191. **The Chair** drew attention to the map on the screens of the unfortunate oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico and said that Switzerland had suggested that the Standing Committee draft a declaration about this incident on behalf of the Convention. The SC agreed the following statement by consensus:

The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands expresses its deep concern at the news of the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, now reaching the coast of Louisiana and its internationally important wetlands.

The SC urges the extractive industries concerned to take all possible measures to ensure that no further such incidents occur and to undertake due diligence in their business operations to minimize any risk of such spillages occurring in the future.

The Ramsar Convention has instructed its Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to prepare guidance for its Contracting Parties on addressing and managing issues of extractive industry business in relation to wetlands and that work is presently underway.

Agenda item 21: Report of the meeting

192. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft reports of the first two days of the plenary sessions and, after allowing time for the participants to read them over, led the participants page-by-page through the drafts. Participants wishing editorial amendments passed their revised texts to the Secretariat.
193. **Paraguay, the Vice Chair of the SC**, read a statement received from Argentina to the effect that Argentina considered that the draft decision text presented under Agenda item 14: 'Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform' was improperly discussed, amended, and adopted in Decision SC41-4, on the grounds that the Co-Chairs of the Working Group (WG) went far beyond their mandate in submitting a text that was not agreed by the Group itself. The recommendation to the SC that was adopted by the Ad Hoc WG is found at the end the Group's report (DOC. SC41-33) and should have been the sole basis for the discussion. Argentina proposed an alternative decision text to the effect that the SC took note of the WG's report and noted that no consensus had been reached.
194. **The Chair** observed that Argentina's statement goes beyond the scope of the SC's discussion as described in the report of the meeting and would thus be difficult to include in the report. He noted that in Decision SC41-4 the SC did not make a substantive decision on the issues but merely sought more information.

195. **Mexico** said that there were procedural difficulties in the treatment of the Co-Chairs' draft text, because in the WG's five meetings that text was never discussed. The SC should have confined itself to discussing the recommendation found on page 8 of the WG's report.
196. **Cameroon** stated that as a matter of procedure the statement by Argentina could not be introduced at this time, because the purpose of Agenda item 21 is solely to determine whether the draft report accurately reflects what was said and decided in the earlier session.
197. **The USA** strongly objected to the content of Decision SC41-4 and read a statement for the record, to the effect that the proposal by the Co-Chairs was made in disregard of proper procedure and should not have been adopted by the SC. The US statement provided a number of reasons for which the Ad Hoc WG exercise lacked transparency and should be considered "a solution in search of a problem".
198. **The Chair** ruled that the SC decision has already been adopted and that the only question that remains is whether the statements for the record could be included in the meeting report, annexed to it, or omitted from it.
199. **The USA** expressed willingness to abide by the decision of the Parties but asked to have its statement included in the record.
200. **Indonesia** suggested that since the Secretariat's situation under IUCN is satisfactory it would be reasonable to continue the existing arrangement.
201. **Jamaica** pointed out that Rule 38 of the COP Rules of Procedure speaks directly to this matter: "When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same meeting, unless the Conference of the Parties, by a two thirds majority of the Parties present and voting, decides in favor of reconsideration."
202. **The DSG** concurred that the present discussion is solely of a factual nature, intended to ensure that the report of the meeting accurately reflects what was said and decided. He suggested that the report of the meeting should note in summary form that the statements were made for the record under Agenda item 21. Any reopening of the substantive issues should take place in subsequent Working Group meetings or the next SC meeting.
203. **The Chair** observed that two-thirds of the voting members would not be agreeable to reopening the issues and inquired whether the statements should be appended to the report. **Cameroon** and **Marshall Islands** argued that the meeting report accurately reflected what was said and no other statements should be included. **Germany** agreed and noted that Resolution X.5 (2008) does give the SC the authority to concretize or extend the WG's mandate. **The SG** felt that reopening substantive matters in contravention of the

Rules of Procedure would set a dangerous precedent, and he asked all participants to be constructive.

204. **The Chair** concluded that the full statements for the record should not be included in or attached to the report of the meeting unless two-thirds of the voting members decide otherwise. **Mexico** requested that its statement be included in the report. **The DSG** promised that what the participants have said will be summarized in the report under the present Agenda item.
205. **Paraguay** pointed out that in reading Argentina's statement he was performing the role of Regional Representative on the Standing Committee, and it did not necessarily reflect Paraguay's own position.
206. **Iraq**, referring to an intervention by the Islamic Republic of Iran in paragraph 146 above concerning the Hawizeh Marsh, made a statement re-emphasizing the evidence for the seriousness of the situation on the Iraqi side of the Marsh and the whole situation in the Southern Iraqi Marshes. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** clarified that he had not meant to imply that the situation was not a matter of great concern and in need of urgent improvement, only that the situation is better than it was when the site was designated in 2007. He felt that the matter is not exclusively bilateral but rather needs the collective effort of all the countries involved in the river basin.
207. **The Chair** explained the Convention's established method for finalizing the report of the meeting.

Decision SC41-39: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the first two days of the meeting, as amended, and mandated the Chair to approve the report of the third day on its behalf.

Agenda item 24: Closing statements

208. **The SG** expressed his sincere thanks to Georgia for hosting this important meeting and called it an excellent experience, not only for the business concluded but also for the opportunity for Georgia to show its natural treasures. He congratulated Georgia for its efforts in wetland management and raising awareness of wetland values, especially in reaching out to schoolchildren. He commended the good decisions adopted by SC41 and promised to report to SC42 on progress in their implementation. He thanked the participants, the Chair of the STRP and all partners, the staff of the Secretariat for the logistical and document preparation, as well as the interpreters and Georgian volunteers.
209. **The Chair** expressed his great appreciation to the government of Georgia, especially to Minister Khachidze and H.E. Varshalomidze, head of the government of the Adjara Autonomous Republic. He thanked the participants, without whose full cooperation the

meeting could not have been concluded so successfully. He drew attention to the many important decisions that had been made, especially concerning the SG's renewal, the Ad Hoc Working Group, the new Regional Initiatives, and many others. He, too, thanked the interpreters and the volunteers, and he felt that we can now move confidently toward COP11 in Romania.

210. **The Director of the Georgia Palace Hotel**, on behalf of her team, said that it had been a great pleasure to welcome the Standing Committee and felt that the meeting was important for the hotel and for the whole country. She hoped the participants' stay had been memorable and looked forward to their next visit. **The Chair** expressed his appreciation for the great hospitality shown by the hotel and its staff.
211. **The Georgian delegation** said that it had been a great pleasure to host this important meeting and make many new friends.
212. **Paraguay, the Vice Chair**, recounted an anecdote of leaving his country to come to Georgia and pointed out the importance of the Convention's work in building international consensus and working for conservation. He thanked the Georgian hosts for their hospitality, music and culture, and friendship. He thanked the Chair, the SG, the DSG, and all of the participants.
213. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** expressed appreciation to Georgia and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and said that the meeting had been a great experience for all. He hoped that the tradition of holding the SC meeting outside of Gland would continue.
214. **Finland, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, thanked on behalf of Europe the government of Georgia and its Ministry of Environment, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and all of the participants. She said that this meeting showed the added value of meeting outside of Gland and brought us all more closely together.
215. **Romania** thanked the authorities, the Ministry of Environment, and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara for their warm hospitality and the opportunity to experience the beauty of the landscape and the fascinating culture. He drew attention to the added value of meeting outside of Gland and hoped that that tradition would continue and bring new opportunities to learn. He thanked the Secretariat staff for their professional work and for their support, especially by Tobias Salathé, for the BlackSeaWet initiative, which he hoped would be a successful Regional Initiative.
216. **The USA** said that Ramsar "connects landscapes, watersheds, and people". He thanked the host country for taking wonderful care of us and thanked all the friends who helped him during the course of the meeting. He said that Ramsar is a fellowship of friends who care for one another, and he wished the Secretary General the very best.

217. **The Chair** closed the meeting.