



## The *modus operandi* of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) 2013-2015

Adopted by Resolution IX.11, as refined by X.9, and adjusted in line with Resolution XI.18.

### I. Key objective of the STRP *modus operandi*

1. The key objective of this *modus operandi* is to establish ways and means of ensuring that the STRP mechanism delivers the best available scientific and technical advice to the Convention, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, through the work of widely recognized wetland conservation and wise use experts and networks.

### II. Establishment and responsibilities of the STRP Oversight Committee

2. The STRP Oversight Committee will report to the Standing Committee and will be composed of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standing Committee, the Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP, and the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General *ex officio*. The Oversight Committee will be chaired by the Chair of Standing Committee.
3. The responsibilities of the STRP Oversight Committee are to:
  - i) appoint the members, Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP;
  - ii) provide intersessional advice, guidance and support to the operations and work of the Panel;
  - iii) keep under review, and advise the Standing Committee on, the operations of the Panel under this revised *modus operandi*; and
  - iv) provide advice to the Secretariat on expenditures under the STRP budget line.
4. The Standing Committee continues to have overall responsibility for the work of the STRP, and the Chair of the STRP will report to each Standing Committee meeting on progress with the STRP programme of work and priorities as established by the COP and Standing Committee.

### III. Criteria and characteristics of candidate STRP members

5. Candidates for appointment as members of the STRP must have the following:
  - i) demonstrated capacity for networking with wetland conservation and wise use experts at local, national and international scales<sup>1</sup>, and demonstrated engagement in such expert networks; and/or
  - ii) widely recognized experience and expertise in one or more aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, particularly those relevant to the priority themes and tasks identified by the COP for the forthcoming work of the Panel;
  - iii) experience of working with wetland experts at local, regional and national levels, including, when appropriate, STRP National Focal Points;
  - iv) full access to electronic mail and Web-based information and communication systems, through which the intersessional work of the Panel will take place;
  - v) full fluency in understanding, and fluent written and oral communication in, English (which remains the working language of the Panel); and
  - vi) commitment to undertake the work required of the Panel and its Working Groups with the support, where relevant, of the member's organization or institution.
6. STRP members are appointed for their expertise in their own right, and are not appointed as a representative of their institution, organization, country or region or any other entity.

#### **IV. Composition and role of the Panel**

7. The composition of the Panel will be (for the 2013-2015 triennium):
  - i) a Chairperson and 13 expert members, appointed to the Panel by the STRP Oversight Committee for the 2013-2015 triennium, taking into account the priority themes and tasks for this triennium as set out in the annexes to Resolution XI.17;
  - ii) one appointed member shall have CEPA expertise;
  - iii) one appointed member shall have socio-economic science expertise; and
  - iii) at least one member, and preferably two, shall be appointed from each of the six Ramsar regions.
8. The primary roles and responsibilities of the Panel and its members are to:
  - a) establish the scope, deliverables and approach to delivery for each task assigned to it by the Conference of the Parties, including through thematic scoping workshops as

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<sup>1</sup> Note that access to such networks is also one of the key purposes of the standing membership on the STRP of the Convention's International Organization Partners and the invitation to relevant scientific and technical organizations to participate as observers to the Panel.

- appropriate, and in so doing ensure input from the network of STRP National Focal Points, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and other relevant organizations,
- b) commission, through the Secretariat and resources permitting, an expert or experts to lead preparation of the work identified,
  - c) ensure appropriate peer review of draft materials, including consideration of how best to present the material in order to ensure its effective communication and uptake,
  - d) review (including with STRP NFPs) and approve all scientific and technical materials prior to any transmittal of them to Parties, including to the Conference of the Parties, in line with the terms of Resolution VIII.45, and
  - e) leverage their own networks of wetland experts nationally and internationally to contribute to the work of the Panel.
9. The appointed member with expertise in Communications, Education, Participation & Awareness (CEPA), has the role of providing input to all stages of the Panel's work on each task, from scoping the needs of the identified users to the finalization of outputs, drawing *inter alia* on the Convention's CEPA networks and those of the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs).
  10. In recognition of their ongoing scientific and technical support for the Convention, each of the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) will continue to be a member of the Panel. So as to ensure continuity of representation throughout STRP processes and meetings during and between inter-COP periods, each IOP will be requested to nominate its representative on the Panel, and this nomination will be considered and confirmed by the STRP Oversight Committee as part of their Panel appointment role. Such IOP nominees should be wetland experts and have a role within their IOPs for maintaining and accessing the wetland conservation and wise use expertise of their organization's regional and global networks.
  11. The appointed members will lead (or co-lead) any Working Groups established by the STRP responsible for overseeing delivery of the COP-approved tasks on these themes – they will oversee the work of any task forces established within a Working Group to deliver a specific priority task, and should be prepared to undertake such a role.
  12. The thematic work areas will be reviewed for each inter-COP period and will be approved by the COP.
  13. For themes and tasks indicated by the COP (for 2013-2015 in the annexes to Resolution XI.17), the Panel will, after first evaluating and assessing any relevant work already in existence in order to avoid duplication, seek additional expertise as and when required through various means, including through collaboration with the scientific advisory bodies of other international conventions and agencies, the International Organization Partners, STRP invited observer organizations, and STRP invited experts.
  14. The Panel should, especially when considering a new or emerging issue within its mandate, first prepare and issue to Contracting Parties and others a Scientific & Technical Briefing Note outlining the issue and its relevance to the implementation of the Convention, and invite feedback from Contracting Parties before giving consideration to bringing such issues formally through Draft Resolutions for the Parties' consideration.

15. The STRP, working with the STRP National Focal Points, will consider mechanisms for identifying task-based national expert contacts to undertake a) participation in specialist work on specific STRP tasks and b) review of draft documents.
16. STRP and Secretariat will seek to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP National Focal Points and other wetland experts.
17. The schedule of Panel meetings will be confirmed by the STRP Oversight Committee and may include up to two plenary meetings between COPs, one meeting not later than six months after the previous COP and the other not later than six months before the next COP.

**V. Procedure for identification and appointment of candidates**

18. Appointments for each inter-COP period will be made by the STRP Oversight Committee.
19. Nominations of candidates for appointment will be invited from:
  - i) the Convention's national Administrative Authorities;
  - ii) STRP National Focal Points (in consultation with their Administrative Authority);
  - iii) the current Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP; and
  - iv) current STRP members (including IOP members) and observers.
20. Nominations can include existing appointed STRP members, observers, and invited experts if they have a proven track record of expert contribution to the work of the Panel. Appointment of such experts to the Panel will ensure continuity in the Panel's work on ongoing thematic work areas.
21. Nominations are not restricted to people from the same country of origin as the nominator, since it is networking capacity and/or relevant expertise that is sought, regardless of the nationality or country of current domicile of the expert.
22. The nominator of each candidate will provide the Oversight Committee with a short summary of the expertise and experience of the candidate and the relevance of this to the work of the Panel for the given period, in the form of a letter of recommendation.
23. Candidates being nominated will provide a declaration that they are willing to be considered for appointment to the Panel, that they have the full support of their organizations or institutions to deliver the work expected of Panel members, including time and availability for meetings, and that they have the necessary English language skills to engage fully in the work of the Panel; they will note whether they will need financial support to participate in meetings and will provide a brief summary of how they see their skills and expertise contributing to the Panel's work, along with a *curriculum vitae*.
24. On the basis of the nominations received, the Secretariat will prepare an assessment and recommendations for appointments for consideration by the STRP Oversight Committee, which will reach its decisions on appointments through electronic communication and

teleconferences as soon as possible after each COP, in order to permit the Panel to initiate its new programme of work as early as possible.

25. In the event that a vacancy for a member of the Panel arises between COPs, the STRP Oversight Committee will review other nominees and appoint a replacement member as soon as practicable.

## **VI. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel**

26. The Chairperson of the Panel will be appointed by the STRP Oversight Committee as a supernumary post (i.e., additional to the appointments of expert members). The Chairperson must have broad knowledge of wetland issues and be familiar with the work of the Panel and the Convention. The Chairperson will lead the Panel's thematic work on strategic and emerging issues and future priorities.
27. The Vice Chairperson will be appointed from amongst the appointed members to the Panel.
28. The outgoing STRP Chair and Vice Chair will excuse themselves from the STRP Oversight Committee decisions concerning these appointments.

## **VII. STRP observer organizations**

29. The work of the Panel will continue to benefit from the involvement and input of other relevant scientific and technical organizations and their networks, invited by the COP as observers to the Panel<sup>2</sup>. Each organization invited by the COP as an observer to the STRP will be requested to confirm their intent to participate in STRP's work and to nominate its representative on the Panel, in order to ensure continuity of participation. The representative should have the capacity to access his or her organization's national, regional and international network of wetland experts. In order to continue contributing to the efforts to streamline and harmonize the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, invited observers to the STRP will continue to include the chairs of the equivalent scientific and technical subsidiary bodies and relevant staff of the secretariats of other environmental conventions and agreements.

## **VIII. Establishment and operation of Working Groups and task forces**

30. The appointed STRP members may, where appropriate and with the assistance of the Secretariat's STRP support, establish Working Groups at the start of the inter-COP period and will act as their leads or co-leads to develop and oversee progress on the tasks requested by the COP.
31. Membership of any Working Group will be established by its lead or co-leads, with the advice of the STRP Chair and Vice-Chair and the Secretariat. Membership may include *inter alia* other appointed STRP members, representatives of STRP observer organizations, STRP National Focal Points with relevant expertise, and other invited experts with relevant expertise.

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<sup>2</sup> The list of bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers to STRP for 2013-2015 (Annex 1 to Resolution XI.18) is provided in Appendix 2.

32. As part of the Panel's work in its strategic review function on emerging issues and related matters, the Chairperson will coordinate the Panel's advice to the next COP concerning high and emerging priorities for its work in the next period (see also paragraph 14 above concerning the process for raising such matters).
33. Each Working Group will develop the scope and contents of any advice, guideline, review or other output requested by COP within its theme as a high priority for the inter-COP period; will identify the mechanism for its delivery (including through an expert consultancy contract if necessary and resources permitting); and will oversee and review progress in the drafting and finalization of such materials.
34. When appropriate, a Working Group or the Chairperson can establish a task force for the delivery of a particular high priority task in the STRP's programme for the period.
35. Each Working Group will keep under review opportunities for initiating other (lower priority) tasks requested of the Panel within its theme, and will develop mechanisms for the delivery of any such tasks as and when capacity permits.
36. If the opportunity or need arises to initiate additional new tasks (e.g. on emerging issues) between COPs, the Chair of the Panel will seek the advice of the STRP Oversight Committee about establishing appropriate ways and means of developing this work.
37. Each Working Group will work largely electronically (through e-mail, the Web-based STRP Support Service mechanism, and teleconferences) but will, resources permitting, meet in a workshop at least once during the inter-COP period, in order to progress its work efficiently.

#### **IX. Ensuring continuing national and regional applicability in the work of the STRP**

38. One key to ensuring full national and regional input to the STRP's work is the continuing activation of the network of STRP National Focal Points (NFPs) appointed by each Contracting Party. A Terms of Reference and skills profile for STRP NFPs is provided as Appendix 1 to this *modus operandi*.
39. The Secretariat will support the development of the STRP National Focal Point network through identification of the expertise and capacity needs of STRP National Focal Points, including seeking ways and means of supporting their development of national networks.
40. The Secretariat and STRP will identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP National Focal Points;
41. A second aspect of ensuring regional input to, and relevance of, the STRP is to have as part of its mandate the task of responding to regional scientific and technical priorities. In doing so, the STRP will consult with Contracting Parties through their STRP National Focal Points, the Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisors, regional initiatives operating under the framework of the Convention (Resolution XI.6), and will consider to regional scientific and technical priorities identified by Ramsar regional meetings.

**X. Continuity of Panel membership**

42. In order to ensure continuity of expertise and working practices, a minimum of one-third of the appointed members of the STRP should be reappointed for a second term, as appropriate.
43. The Chair of the STRP, following appropriate consultations with current members, will recommend to the STRP Oversight Committee the names of those members who should be considered for reappointment, on the basis of their contributions to the work of the Panel and the relevance of their areas of expertise to the priority tasks assigned to the Panel by COP.
44. Members being proposed for reappointment must have demonstrated a capability of contributing effectively to the work of the Panel and have confirmed their willingness to be reappointed.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Terms of Reference for STRP National Focal Points**

1. The Ramsar Administrative Authority for the Contracting Party is responsible for ensuring:
  - i) the appointment of that Party's STRP National Focal Point (NFP);
  - ii) that the STRP NFP is appropriately qualified for this role as defined in this Terms of Reference, and that the Secretariat and STRP are provided with information on this in line with the STRP NFP expertise, skills and capacity profile provided in this Terms of Reference;
  - iii) that the STRP NFP has contact with national experts relevant to the work areas of the Panel;
  - iv) that the STRP NFP is involved in relevant Ramsar processes within the Contracting Party (including participating in any National Ramsar or Wetland Committee); and
  - v) that the contact information for the STRP NFP is notified to the STRP through the Ramsar Secretariat, and that it is kept up-to-date and functional.
2. The main function of the STRP NFP in each country is to provide input and support to the implementation of the Work Plan of the STRP, as approved by the first full meeting of the Standing Committee that follows each COP.
3. An STRP NFP is a person appointed to the role in his or her own right for their scientific and technical expertise in wetland conservation and wise use issues, and he or she does not act to represent any organization or government in the work of the STRP.

4. In order to undertake their work, the STRP NFPs should maintain regular contact and communication with the other Ramsar NFPs (Administrative Authority and the CEPA Focal Points) in their country and, as much as possible, with other STRP NFPs in the region.
5. The STRP NFP should, to the extent possible, consult with and seek input from other experts, expert bodies and wetland centres in his/her country. In this regard, the NFP should mobilize local capacity at the country level, e.g., through the establishment of a Ramsar/wetland scientific and technical committee.
6. The STRP NFPs can identify and recommend other people in their countries who have the specialist expertise and experience to participate in a thematic work area of the STRP. Additionally, the NFPs are encouraged to provide information to the STRP on local or national initiatives that are relevant to the STRP's work.
7. The NFPs are encouraged to use the opportunities of suitable national meetings, newsletters, e-mail, etc., to canvas the views of the expert community and, when feasible, to organize expert consultations on key issues in the STRP Work Plan. The latter should be done in coordination with the relevant thematic STRP Working Group Leads and the Secretariat.
8. STRP NFPs in each country are expected to maintain regular contact, and endeavour to identify and undertake activities of common interest, with their equivalent National Focal Points of the technical and scientific bodies of other relevant international and regional environment-related Conventions, and especially for those with which the Ramsar Convention has in place a Memorandum of Cooperation or Understanding, namely, the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Desertification, Migratory Species, and World Heritage.
9. The STRP NFPs are also expected to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of projects funded under the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (SGF), as may be required by the Ramsar Administrative Authority in each country and/or the agency implementing the project.
10. The National Focal Points should take an active role in supporting national wetland inventory activities and in supporting the efforts of their Contracting Parties to implement the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*.
11. The STRP NFPs should provide advice to, and participate in, meetings of the National Wetland/Ramsar Committee or similar bodies (e.g., National Biodiversity Committees) where they exist, and provide advice in the preparation of National Reports to Conferences of Contracting Parties. They should also assist in disseminating information on the work of the STRP, interpreted as appropriate to the national context, to relevant individuals and bodies in their countries.
12. Contact with, and input of, the STRP NFPs will be established and maintained by the Secretariat's Scientific & Technical Support Officer working with the appropriate Senior Regional Advisor within the Ramsar Secretariat. When an STRP NFP is engaged in a thematic work area, or work task, their inputs should also be through the STRP member leading that specific work area or task in the Panel's Work Plan.



13. In general, the STRP network of NFPs will operate through correspondence and as much as possible through e-mail and the Web-based STRP Support Service. To this effect, the Ramsar Secretariat will include the NFPs with access to e-mail connections to any list-server devoted to STRP members. In addition, the Secretariat has created a dedicated section of the STRP Support Service Web site for the presentation and consideration of STRP matters.
14. As, due to financial limitations, the main working language of the STRP and its network of NFPs is English, the NFP is required to be suitably proficient in the English language, especially written English.
15. STRP NFPs will provide the STRP and Ramsar Secretariat with information concerning their thematic areas of wetland conservation and wise use interest and expertise (through a short questionnaire) and the STRP Working Groups in which they wish directly to participate;
16. STRP NFPs are provided with full access to the Web-based STRP workspace so that they may have input to all stages of the Panel's work, including the development of the scope of delivery of each priority task, the review of draft materials as they are prepared by the Working Groups and task forces, and contribution to the peer review of reports and other documents being considered for publication in the *Ramsar Technical Report* and Briefing Note series.

#### **An expertise, skills and capacity profile for STRP NFPs**

17. For consideration for appointment by their Contracting Party Administrative Authority, an STRP NFP should have:
  - i) a good understanding of national/regional issues and priorities concerning water and wetlands;
  - ii) a demonstrated capacity for networking with wetland conservation and wise use experts at local and national scales (and international scale if appropriate), demonstrated engagement in such networks, and ability to facilitate consensus among people with different backgrounds (e.g., scientists, government and NGO sector);
  - iii) widely recognized experience and expertise within his or her country in one or more aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, particularly those relevant to the priority work areas and tasks identified by the COP for the forthcoming work of the STRP;
  - iv) experience of working with wetland experts at local to national levels, and facilitating discussions and coordinating and consolidating review responses on science-based documents;
  - v) full access to electronic mail and Web-based information and communication systems, through which the intersessional work of the STRP will take place;
  - vi) full fluency in understanding, and fluency in reading and writing, English (which remains the working language of the STRP); and

- vii) full commitment and the time necessary to undertake the work required of the STRP NFP, and with the support, where relevant, of the NFP's organization or institution.
18. When a Contracting Party appoints a new STRP NFP, or reaffirms the appointment of an existing STRP NFP, the Party should provide to the Secretariat information on the expertise, skills and capacity of their STRP NFP in relation to the criteria listed in paragraph 17 above.

## Appendix 2

### **Bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the meetings and processes of the STRP for the 2013-2015 triennium**

(Annex 1 to Resolution XI.18)

- the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
- the Technical Committee of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)
- the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility
- the Secretariats of the CBD, CMS, CITES, UNCCD, UNFCCC, the World Heritage Convention (WHC); UNESCO – Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), the UNECE “Water Convention”, and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group of the Arctic Council
- the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- the UNEP – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)
- the World Health Organization (WHO)
- UN-HABITAT
- UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education
- UNESCO-IHP International Hydrological Programme
- United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
- the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS)
- the Coordinating Committee for the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (GGAP-CoCo)
- the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
- the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

- Conservation International (CI)
- Ducks Unlimited (DU)
- the Global Water Partnership (GWP)
- the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)
- the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER)
- the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE)
- the European Space Agency – ESRIN (ESA-ESRIN)
- the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)
- Group on Earth Observation – Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO-BON)
- the International Crane Foundation (ICF)
- the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Program (BBOP)
- the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
- the interim Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)