

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**11th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel
Gland, Switzerland, 8-11 April 2003**

DOC. STRP11-7

Agenda item 5.4

**Establishment and Terms of Reference of the STRP
Support Service**

Action requested: the STRP is invited to note the role and Terms of Reference of the STRP Support Service, and the assistance it will provide to the Panel in undertaking its work.

Background

1. Resolution VIII.28, *Modus operandi of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel*, endorsed the establishment of an STRP Support Service, working in open and transparent partnership with all International Organization Partners, STRP observer organizations and others, and it instructed the Ramsar Bureau to establish, with the approval of the Standing Committee, a contractual arrangement and terms of reference for the delivery of this Service.
2. Paragraph 36 of the Annex to Resolution VIII.28 established that the role of the STRP Support Service will be to:
 - a) establish improved links with, and knowledge of, existing expert networks operated by the Convention (Ramsar Experts Database, STRP National Focal Points), IOPs, and other organizations with observer status to STRP and/or with which the Convention has developed links;
 - b) further develop and build the capacity of the network of STRP National Focal Points and their within-country expert networks;
 - c) identify gaps in expert network coverage in relation to the STRP's work, and seek to fill those gaps through identification and establishing linkage with other existing networks and the establishment of new networks as appropriate;
 - d) advise the STRP on appropriate experts from these networks to contribute to the work of the STRP; and
 - e) support the work of Expert Working Groups established by the STRP, on behalf of the Bureau.
3. The STRP's *modus operandi* also indicates (paragraph 38 g) that the work of the STRP Support Service under 2 e) above will include supporting the preparation of substantive guidelines and other reports by external experts, as resources permit, and assisting the Ramsar Bureau in identifying the costs of preparing each substantive task identified for the work of the STRP.

4. For the effective delivery of the functions it is being established to undertake, it will be essential for STRP Support Service to be operational by the time of the 11th meeting of the STRP in April 2003.
5. The Convention's core budget for the 2003-2005 triennium, adopted by Resolution VIII.27, includes CHF 110,000 per annum for the running of the STRP Support Service.
6. In early 2003 the Bureau issued an invitation to each of the Convention's four International Organization Partners (IOPs) to offer to provide the STRP Support Service functions, for consideration by the Standing Committee during its 29th meeting in February 2003.
7. At its 29th meeting, the Standing Committee considered the Terms of Reference for the STRP Support Service, and a costed proposal to undertake the service submitted by Wetlands International working in collaboration with the Convention's three other International Organization Partners (IOPs). Through Decision SC29-15 the Standing Committee adopted the proposal for establishment of the STRP Support Service and its Terms of Reference, and instructed the Bureau to conclude contractual arrangements in line with these terms. The Terms of Reference are provided in the Annex to this note.
8. The Bureau is now concluding the contractual arrangements for the STRP Support Service, so that it may provide the required input and advice to the 11th meeting of the STRP.
9. The Panel should note that full implementation of all components of these Terms of Reference under this contract will be conditional upon the contractor resubmitting a revised activity-based budget following, and taking into account, the decisions taken by the 11th meeting of the STRP concerning delivery of its Work Plan.
10. The Panel should also note that the work of the STRP Support Service does not cover the costs of preparation of any substantive guidances or reports which may be undertaken in the work of the Panel, and that additional resources will need to be sought so as to fully undertake this work (see also DOC. STRP11-6).
11. Under Agenda item 5.4, Wetlands International will outline the role of the Support Service, and how it will develop its support to the work of the Panel during the 2003-2005 triennium.

ANNEX

Terms of Reference for the Ramsar STRP Support Service

Background and role of the STRP Support Service

1. The Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is the Convention's subsidiary body responsible for providing scientific and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties of the Convention. The Panel for 2003-2005 will consist of 15 members appointed in their own right for their expertise, but from countries of origin on a pro-rata basis (as for the Standing Committee) for each Ramsar region. The Convention's four International Organization Partners (IOPs) are also members of the Panel. Representatives of other global environmental conventions and a number of scientific and technical organizations with which the Convention has established links participate as observers. In addition, the Panel may invite other organizations or individual experts to contribute to its work.
2. A substantive review of the work and operations of the STRP during 1999-2002 has led to a significantly amended *modus operandi* of the Panel being adopted by Contracting Parties at the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP8, Valencia, Spain, November 2002) in Resolution VIII.28. The review and revised *modus operandi* include recognition of the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the STRP to deliver the high quality technical reports and guidance requested of it by decisions of the COP. One mechanism established by COP8 for strengthening this capacity is to establish the STRP Support Service.
3. The STRP Support Service is being established under Resolution VIII.28 (*modus operandi* of the STRP) and Resolution VIII.27 (Financial and budgetary matters) of COP8.
4. The role of the STRP Support Service (Annex to Resolution VIII.28) is to provide increased capacity to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel in its development and implementation of its Work Plan for 2003-2005. Specifically, the role of the STRP Support Service will be to:
 - a) establish improved links with, and knowledge of, existing expert networks operated by the Convention (Ramsar Experts Database, STRP National Focal Points), IOPs, and other organizations with observer status to STRP and/or with which the Convention has developed links;
 - b) further develop and build the capacity of the network of STRP National Focal Points and their within-country expert networks;
 - c) identify gaps in expert network coverage in relation to the STRP's work, and seek to fill those gaps through identification and establishing linkage with other existing networks and the establishment of new networks as appropriate;
 - d) advise the STRP on appropriate experts from these networks to contribute to the work of the STRP; and

- e) support the work of Expert Working Groups established by the STRP, on behalf of the Bureau.
- 5. The STRP's *modus operandi* sets out that the work of the STRP Support Service under 2 e) above will include supporting the preparation of substantive guidelines and other reports, by external experts as resources permit, and assisting the Ramsar Bureau in identifying the costs of preparing each substantive task identified for the work of the STRP.
- 6. The STRP Support Service is required to work in open and transparent partnership with all International Organization Partners, STRP observer organizations and others.
- 7. The STRP Support Service is established as contractual arrangements with the Ramsar Bureau for the provision of these services. These contractual arrangements should ensure that there is flexibility in the operations of the Support Service so as to be responsive to the needs identified for the delivery of the service by the STRP as it develops and implements its Work Plan.
- 8. The contract will cover support to those tasks identified by the Standing Committee as the priority work of the STRP, including those tasks necessary prior to and during the first meeting of the STRP. The funds allocated to this contract will not exceed 70% of the total sum available in the Convention's core budget 2003-2005 for the delivery of the Support Service. If necessary, amendments to the contract will be implemented in consultation with the Chair of the STRP in order to address the tasks identified at the first meeting of the STRP and, if necessary, during the triennium.
- 9. Contract amendments and/or, if agreed as necessary, additional contracts will be concluded in order to cover those Support Service tasks which will be identified by the STRP in the course of its work. The total value of the contracts and any amendments will not exceed the total available from the core budget allocation of CHF 330,000 for the triennium.
- 10. Should the total cost of the contracts be less than the total available under the core budget line for the Support Service, the allocation of any remaining sums to other STRP-related work shall be made with the approval of the Chair of the STRP in consultation with the Chair of the Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance.

Tasks required of the STRP Support Service

- 11. In delivering the five elements of its role, the Support Service will be expected to support the work of the STRP and the identification and accessing of scientific and technical expertise in support of the Convention during the 2003-2005 triennium through the delivery of tasks and expertise, including through the following activities:
 - a) **prior to the first meeting of the STRP (8-11 April 2003)**
 - i) develop a three year workplan for the STRP Support Service, in full partnership with the International Organization Partners (this plan will be regularly reviewed and updated during the triennium as the work progresses);

- ii) review the priority tasks and other tasks directed for the STRP during 2003-2005 by the decisions of the 29th meeting of Standing Committee (26-28 February 2003);
- iii) identify existing expert networks, including those maintained by IOPs, STRP observer organizations and other organizations with which the Convention has, or is establishing, links;
- iv) establish contact with each network and organization, and request each to identify technical and scientific experts from their networks who may be able and willing to contribute to the work of the STRP on each of its anticipated tasks; and
- v) identify, so as to report to STRP, gaps in coverage of existing expert networks, and consider ways and means of developing such networks.

b) during the first meeting of the STRP

- i) present, during the 'briefing and induction session', the role, responsibilities and tasks of the STRP Support Service;
- ii) advise the Panel on relevant networks and organizations who should be invited to contribute to the work of the STRP and any Working Group it establishes for the purpose. This should include advice on existing networks and organizations with which the Convention and its IOPs have established links, and on other such networks and organizations which should be invited by the STRP to participate in its work;
- iii) advise, as far as possible, on individual experts from these networks and organizations with the relevant expertise and availability to contribute to the work of the STRP and its Working Groups;
- iv) advise, as far as possible, the STRP and its Working Groups on appropriate global experts who might be invited, resources permitting, to act as consultants to prepare draft reports and guidances; and
- v) report to STRP on gaps in coverage of existing expert networks available to the STRP, and propose ways and means for developing such networks and/or for establishing links with other existing networks and organizations.

c) between the first and second meetings of the STRP

- i) assist the Ramsar Bureau in identifying the costs of preparing each substantive task identified for the work of the STRP, and help identify sources of funding for such work;
- ii) support, on behalf of the Bureau, the work of the Expert Working Groups established by the STRP, including through:
 - a) providing expert advice and relevant materials to Working Groups;

- b) facilitating and participating in the work of the Working Groups, including through the setting up of electronic discussion groups, teleconferences and other information exchange systems;
- c) facilitating and arranging a mid-term meeting for each Working Group, as needed and resources permitting, for review of first draft materials, and including identifying appropriate conferences and other meetings which might provide a cost-effective and timely venue (Note. mid-term working group meetings should be planned to occur not later than early 2004);
- d) identifying to Working Groups national and international experts and organizations who might be invited to undertake a wider peer review of draft materials prepared by the Working Group;
- e) facilitating the involvement of STRP National Focal Points in contributing to the work of STRP's Working Groups, and any other mechanisms established for the preparation of materials for COP9 (see also section f) below);
- f) monitoring the progress of each Working Group, including the drafting of preparations by experts under contract from the Ramsar Bureau, and providing regular reports on progress from the groups to the STRP Chair and the Bureau; and
- g) ensuring that all relevant materials from each Working Group are transmitted in a timely manner to the Bureau for their preparation for circulation for review by the Panel at its second meeting of the triennium.

d) at, and after, the second meeting of the STRP

- i) report to STRP on work undertaken by the STRP Support Service; and
- ii) facilitate the finalization of any materials prepared by Working Groups following their review by the Panel at its second meeting, and ensure their timely delivery to the Bureau for preparation for consideration by the Standing Committee.

e) Expert network development and maintenance

- i) establish improved links with, and knowledge of, existing expert networks operated by the Convention (Ramsar Experts Database, STRP National Focal Points), IOPs, other organizations with observer status to STRP and/or with which the Convention has developed links;
- ii) encourage the active support to the STRP of Specialist Group networks, especially those managed by IUCN, Wetlands International, and other Ramsar observer partners;
- iii) review the Ramsar Experts Database and agree with the Bureau a mechanism for its future *modus operandi*, including links to the development and maintenance of a Wetland Expert Database designed to enable access by the Convention to all relevant networks;

- iv) establish mechanisms for regular liaison between all of the Convention's IOPs concerning the development of expert networks and the provision of expertise to the work of the STRP and other Convention processes, as appropriate; and
- v) establish contact with other existing networks and organizations relevant to the work of the STRP, and through the Chair of STRP and the Bureau seek their involvement and input to the Convention's scientific and technical work; and
- vi) where identified gaps in network coverage exist in relation to STRP's 2003-2005 work areas and/or work for the STRP which may be anticipated from the actions in the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008, seek to develop new Specialist Groups or networks, as appropriate.

f) STRP National Focal Points

- i) assume responsibility for maintenance and development of a communication system for STRP National Focal Points (NFPs), including the STRP-NFP listserver (currently established and run by staff of the Ramsar Bureau);
- ii) establish and implement a mechanism for identifying the expertise, in relation to the STRP's tasks, of NFPs, and advise the Bureau, the STRP Chair and leads of any Working Groups established by the STRP on those appropriate to invite to participate in each Working Group, either to contribute to the preparation of reports and guidances or to undertake peer review of draft materials prepared by the Working Group or other processes established by the STRP;
- iii) encourage and facilitate STRP National Focal Points to establish within-country expert networks so that they may contribute, through the NFP, to the work of the Panel; and
- iv) ensure that NFPs have access to all relevant guidance and advice available through the Convention to assist in development of within-country scientific and technical implementation capacity, and encourage their provision of advice to support those responsible for national implementation of the Convention.

Reporting

- 12. The Contractor is required to provide the Ramsar Bureau and Standing Committee with a report on work undertaken in delivering these Terms of Reference, including a full financial report. The schedule of reporting will be the delivery of the report to the Ramsar Bureau not later than one calendar month prior to each meeting of the Standing Committee.
- 13. A final report, including financial reporting, on all work undertaken during the triennium is required to be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau for preparation for consideration at COP9, not later than three calendar months prior to COP9. (Note, the dates for COP9 have not yet been established, but it is anticipated that it will take place in later 2005.)

14. The final report should also include provision of advice to the Bureau on the *modus operandi* of the STRP, including any suggestions for revisions to the role of the STRP Support Service, should it be approved by COP9 for continuation for the 2005-2008 triennium. (Note. The Chair and members of the STRP will also be requested to provide an evaluation of the role and achievements of the STRP Support Service for inclusion by the Ramsar Bureau in the reporting to COP9 on the implementation of the work plan of the STRP, and for any proposals for amendments to the *modus operandi* of the STRP, including its Support Service.)

Focal points

15. The Ramsar Bureau focal point for the development and delivery of the STRP Support Service will be the Deputy Secretary General, who has overall responsibility for the work of the STRP. It is anticipated that a member of Bureau technical staff will assume responsibility for oversight of each of the major work topics established in the STRP's work plan 2003-2005: these Bureau staff will act as focal points with the STRP Support Service for their specific topics.
16. The IOP providing the Support Service will identify to the Bureau, as part of its contractual arrangement, its focal point for all matters concerning the work of the Support Service.