

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3- 7 December 2001**

**NEW
DOC. SC26-24**

Recommendations from the Subgroup on COP8

The Subgroup on COP8 met on Monday, 3 December. All members of the Subgroup were in attendance: Australia, Costa Rica, France, India, Mexico, Spain (Chair), and Togo. In addition the following observers were present: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, China, Japan, Slovenia, Tanzania, Uganda, and the USA, as well as the four International Organization Partners: BirdLife International, IUCN, Wetlands International and WWF.

The Subgroup considered the issues under Agenda item 12 of the Standing Committee and approved recommendations to the Standing Committee as indicated below:

Agenda Item 12. 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8)

12.1 Report from the host country and the Bureau on practical preparations

Spain made a short introduction to this item and indicated that a full presentation will be made to the Standing Committee on Thursday, 6 December, by the Director General of Nature Conservation, Ms Inés González Doncell.

12.2 Report on Ramsar regional meetings

The Subgroup did not deal with this issue. The Bureau report on this matter will be presented to the Standing Committee and complemented by Contracting Parties that have hosted and/or attended the regional meetings.

12.3 Standing Committee consideration of the following COP8 draft working papers:

12.3 a) i) COP8 Agenda item X a): Interpretation of Articles 2.5 and 4.2 of the Convention: draft resolution and guidelines(DOC. SC26/COP8-1)

Several Parties expressed disagreement with the general approach in the proposed guidelines because they were found to be too prescriptive, providing procedures more than guidance. The Subgroup decided to establish a Contact Group to rework the text. It was agreed that the Contact Group should be composed of Australia (Chair), France, India, Japan, and the USA, and BirdLife International, IUCN, and WWF. The proposals from the Contact Group will be distributed as an annex to this document.

- 12. a) ii) Proposed procedure for the review of Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest, without prejudice to other international obligations (DOC. SC26/COP8-2)**

It was agreed that this document will also be reviewed and revised by the Contact Group established for the previous item.

- 12. b) Revised content of COP8 Technical Session 1: Wetlands: major challenges and emerging opportunities in the new century**

- 12. b) i) STRP proposed Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining ecological functions (DOC. SC26/COP8-3)**

The Subgroup recommends that the Standing Committee:

- a) approve the proposed draft resolution and the attached guidelines, with the request to the Bureau to incorporate, in consultation with the STRP Subgroup that prepared the draft guidelines, the following issues:
 - i) a paragraph in the draft resolution and in Box A of the guidelines dealing with the problem of water pollution and fish passage; and
 - ii) a section in the guidelines addressing the question of certain wetlands that naturally experience dry periods and the seasonability of some river and wetland systems;

Suggested text for the inclusion of these issues will be supplied by Australia and WWF.
- b) approve the circulation of the background paper on this matter as an information document to the COP. (Note: Spain indicated that the section in the background document related to the case study on the Tablas de Daimiel should be updated with the latest developments in this Ramsar site.)

Uganda indicated that it will circulate to the Standing Committee the comments received from Botswana on the proposed guidelines.

- 12. b) ii) STRP proposal on Climate Change & Wetlands: Impacts & Mitigation (DOC. SC26/COP8-4)**

The Subgroup recommends that the Standing Committee approve the finalization of the comprehensive report on this issue, and the draft resolution and its annex, for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

- 12. b) iii) STRP proposal on Principles and Guidelines on integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) (DOC. SC26/COP8-5)**

The Subgroup recommends that the Standing Committee approve the finalization of the principles and guidelines for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. b) iv) Draft resolution on synergies with other conventions (DOC. SC26/COP8-6)

The Subgroup recommends that the Standing Committee approve the proposal that a draft resolution be prepared by the Bureau for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002, in order to take into account the developments of interest to Ramsar that may have occurred in the UNEP-led process on International Environmental Governance, and other developments related with the working relations between Ramsar and other environmental conventions.

12. c) Revised content of COP8 Technical Session 2: Wetland inventory and assessment**12. c) i) STRP proposal for a Ramsar framework for wetland inventory (DOC. SC26/COP8-7)**

The Subgroup recommends the approval of the draft resolution and its annex, noting that this will be finalized to include:

- a) an example of inventory methodology from Ecuador; and
- b) guidance on a standard inventory metadata record.

12. c) ii) (Possible) STRP proposal on Gaps and harmonization of Ramsar guidance on ecological character (DOC. SC26/COP8-8)

The Subgroup recommends that the Standing Committee approve the proposal to continue to prepare a draft resolution and a “Wetlands ecosystem assessment framework” for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. c) iii) Proposed guidance to Contracting Parties concerning their identification and reporting of change and likely change in ecological character, in full accordance with Article 3.2 of the Convention, and options for response to reported change, or likely change, in ecological character, including the *modus operandi* of the Montreux Record, the National Planning Tool [for the Convention], and other mechanisms (DOC. SC26/COP8-9)

The Subgroup was of the opinion that the establishment of the so-called “Valencia Register”, which should incorporate the existing Montreux Record, would constitute a significant development which requires more consultation with Parties. Thus, the Subgroup does not recommend that the Standing Committee approve the draft resolution on “The implementation of Article 3.2 of the Convention”.

The Subgroup recommends that the question of the implementation of Article 3.2 be introduced for discussion at COP8 through a document addressing the pertinent questions related to this issue.

- 12. c) iv) Impact Assessment: CBD guidelines for incorporating biodiversity-related issues into EIA legislation and/or processes and in strategic environmental assessment, and their relevance to Ramsar (DOC. SC26/COP8-10)**

The Subgroup recommends to Standing Committee the approval of the finalization of the draft resolution and its annex for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

- 12. d) Revised content of COP8 Technical Session 3: Practical steps for applying the Vision for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance**

- 12. d) i) Lessons learnt in the implementation of the of the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List (Resolution VII.11) [A report based on the analysis of the National Reports and a draft resolution for future action]**

Note: Since there was no working document for this item, the Subgroup did not consider it. The Standing Committee may wish to approve a request that a draft report and draft resolution should be prepared by the Bureau for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

- 12. d) ii) STRP proposals for Guidelines for designation as Wetlands of International Importance of: a) peatlands; b) mangroves; c) coral reefs and d) sea grass beds (DOC. SC26/COP8-11)**

The Subgroup recommends approval of the draft resolution and its annex.

- 12. d) iii) Proposal on Guidelines for the designation of mountain wetlands as Wetlands of International Importance (DOC. SC26/COP8-12)**

The Subgroup recommends approval of the draft resolution and its annex.

- 12. d) iv) The Ramsar Sites Database, including the nature and extent of data holdings and relationship between “official” and “unofficial” data on Ramsar sites (DOC. SC26/COP8-13)**

The Subgroup recommends the approval of the preparation of a paper on this matter for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

Note: it was indicated that “unofficial” data is understood to mean relevant data collected and published by unquestionable sources, but which have not been provided formally through the Ramsar Administrative Authority.

- 12. d) v) The Ramsar Data Gateway: a demonstration of its capacities and potential**

Note: Since there was no working document for this item, the Subgroup did not consider it. The Standing Committee may wish to agree that a demonstration of the Ramsar Data Gateway will be presented to the COP.

12. e) Revised content of COP8 Technical Session 4: Managing wetlands for sustainable use: lessons learned and new perspectives

12. e) i) STRP proposal for new Ramsar Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands (DOC. SC26/COP8-14)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the draft resolution and its annex in principle and, given the importance of this tool, that it request the Bureau to distribute them to CPs as soon as possible in the three official languages for comments. With the comments received, a final version should be prepared for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. e) ii) STRP proposal concerning the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (DOC. SC26/COP8-15)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the draft resolution and its annex, with the request that a definition of peatlands should be added at the beginning of the guidelines, consistent with the definition used in the proposed guidelines for designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites (DOC. SC26/COP8-11).

12. e) iii) STRP proposal for a draft resolution, including guidance for the Parties, on the Report of the World Commission on Dams (DOC. SC26/COP8-16)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the finalization of a draft resolution and its annex for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. e) iv) STRP proposal for a draft resolution, including guidance for the Parties, on invasive species (DOC. SC26/COP8-17)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the finalization of a draft resolution and additional Ramsar guidance on the use of the CBD Guiding Principles [Guidelines] on this matter for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

The Subgroup recommends that the supplementary *Ramsar Guide to invasive species* be prepared as a formal background paper for COP8.

12. f) Revised content of COP8 Technical Session 5: Cultural aspects of wetlands as a tool for their conservation and sustainable use

12. f) i) Guiding principles on the cultural aspects of wetlands (DOC. SC26/COP8-18)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the finalization of the guidelines for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. g) STRP proposal for a resolution and Guiding Principles on Wetlands Restoration (DOC. SC26/COP8-19)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the draft resolution and its annex, with the recommendation that the substance of paragraph 14 in the draft resolution be placed before paragraph 10.

12. h) STRP proposal for a resolution on incentive measures (DOC. SC26/COP8-20)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the finalization of a the draft resolution for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

12. i) (Possible) STRP proposal for changes in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) (DOC. SC26/COP8-21)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the proposal that the STRP will prepare a draft resolution on this matter for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting on 6-8 May 2002.

The STRP should be invited to consider: a) ways of including more quantitative data concerning “ecological character” in the RIS, to form the baseline for monitoring; and b) the possible need to have two different RISs, one for Ramsar site designations and one for the periodic updates of the Ramsar sites data.

12. j) STRP proposal on the San José Record of well-managed Ramsar sites (DOC. SC26/COP8-22)

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the draft resolution and its annex.

12 k) Proposed changes in the *modus operandi* of the Scientific Technical and Review Panel (STRP) (DOC. SC26/COP8-23)

Note: this issue was not considered by the Subgroup since it will be addressed by the Subgroup specifically established for this matter.

12 l) Draft resolution on unpaid Contracting Party contributions (DOC. SC26/COP8-24)

Japan expressed its strong opposition to the inclusion of paragraphs 6 and 7 in the draft resolution. Since the substance of these two paragraphs was adopted by the Standing Committee at its last meeting, it was considered appropriate to bring the matter back to the Committee.

12 m) Draft Ramsar’s Strategic Plan 2003-2008 (DOC. SC26/COP8-25)

Note: this matter was not considered by the Subgroup since it will be addressed by the Subgroup specifically established for this purpose. Japan pointed out that all issues in the Strategic Plan that have financial implications should be referred to the Subgroup on Finance, as required by the COP6 resolution that established this Subgroup.

**12 n) COP8 Agenda item XII: The Convention's Work Plan 2003-2005
(DOC. SC26/COP8-26)**

The Subgroup recommends that Standing Committee approve the proposal that the Convention Work Plan 2003-2005 should be prepared by the Bureau on the basis of the last version of the Strategic Plan and the national targets provided by CPs before COP8 (if this proposal is adopted by the Standing Committee).

Other matters

1. Responding to a query on the role of the meeting of the Subgroup on COP8 on 6-8 May 2002, the Secretary General indicated that in his understanding the Standing Committee will delegate to the Subgroup the authority to approve the documents that are being referred to the consideration of the Subgroup at that meeting. In this regard, the Standing Committee may wish to decide that all documents should be circulated to all Standing Committee members for comment.

The Subgroup recommends that its meeting on 6-8 May 2002 be open to all Contracting Parties that wish to attend as observers. If this recommendation should be adopted, the Bureau should formally notify all CPs and transmit to them the draft agenda for the meeting.

2. The question of the use of the three official languages at Standing Committee meetings and at meeting of its Subgroups was raised by Japan, and it was recommended that the issue be discussed by the Standing Committee. The Bureau will prepare a separate document on this matter.
3. WWF proposed that the titles of the Technical Sessions at COP8 be reconsidered, and their contents be re-arranged so that they are more attuned to current developments at the international level, in particular vis-à-vis the World Summit on Sustainable Development. WWF will circulate a proposal for consideration by the Standing Committee.