



SUMMARY OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS: 10-18 MAY 1999

The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP7) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands took place from 10-18 May 1999 in San José, Costa Rica. COP7 focused on the interrelations between human societies and wetland habitats, and the general theme of the Conference was "People and Wetlands –The Vital Link."

Approximately 750 participants attended COP7, including officials from 110 Contracting Parties (CPs) to the Convention and 15 observer States, numerous national and international NGOs, representatives of other convention secretariats and intergovernmental institutions, donor agencies and wetland scientists. The programme included five technical sessions, on Ramsar and Water, National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use, Involving People at All Levels in the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands, Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values, and Frameworks for Regional and International Cooperation Regarding Wetlands. Delegates considered several substantive agenda items, including reviews of Convention implementation in each region, the Convention Work Plan and Ramsar budget for 2000-2002, and regional categorization of countries under the Convention. Delegates also considered and adopted 30 resolutions and four recommendations on policy, programme and budgetary issues to advance the work of the Convention into the next century. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Ramsar Secretariat and the World Heritage Center, two countries — Lebanon and Cuba — announced their accession to the Convention, and numerous Contracting Parties (CPs) announced the designation of new Ramsar sites in their countries.

While some thought that the overriding COP7 theme of "People and Wetlands: The Vital Link" was somewhat lost in a plethora of resolutions and political tugs-of-war, COP7 did make good progress in adopting a variety of tools to enable better implementation of the Convention. Many participants felt that COP7 constituted a significant step in Ramsar's development and demonstrated that efforts to broaden its scope, beyond the once somewhat narrow focus on protecting wetlands as habitat for waterfowl and into the wider context of sustainable development concerns, are beginning to bear fruit.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONVENTION

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands), was signed in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971, and came into force on 21 December 1975. The Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It is the only environmental treaty dealing with a particular ecosystem.

There are presently 116 CPs to the Convention. There are 977 wetland sites, totaling 71 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar List"). Contracting Parties meet every three years to assess progress of the Convention and wetland conservation, share knowledge and experience on technical issues, and plan for the next triennium. There have been six prior meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COPs) since the Convention's entry into force: COP1 in Cagliari, Italy (24-29 November 1980); COP2 in Groningen, the Netherlands (7-12 May 1984); COP3 in Regina, Canada (27 May-5 June 1987); COP4 in Montreux, Switzerland (27 June-4 July 1990); COP5 in Kushiro, Japan (9-16 June 1993); and COP6 in Brisbane, Australia (19-27 March 1996). COP7 marked the first time that a Ramsar COP was convened in a developing country.

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This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Angela Churie Kallhauge <churie@l.kth.se>, Nabih Megateli <nmegateli@igc.apc.org>, Kira Schmidt (Team Leader) <kiras@iisd.org>, and Chris Spence <spencechris@hotmail.com>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree <kimo@iisd.org>. Digital editing by Andrei Henry <ahenry@iisd.ca> and logistics by Molly Rosenman <mrosenman@iisd.ca>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1999 is provided by the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Community (DG-XI), the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Finland, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above San José, Costa Rica (c)1999 The Living Earth, Inc. <http://livingearth.com>. For information on the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



Parties to the Convention commit themselves to: designate at least one site that meets the Ramsar Criteria for inclusion in the Ramsar List and ensure maintenance of the ecological character of each Ramsar site; include wetland conservation within national land-use planning in order to promote the wise use of all wetlands within their territory; establish nature reserves on wetlands and promote training in wetland research, management and wardening; and consult with other CPs about Convention implementation, especially with regard to transfrontier wetlands, shared water systems, shared species and development projects affecting wetlands.

In addition to the COP, the subsidiary bodies of the Convention include the Standing Committee (SC), the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the Bureau or Secretariat. The SC includes Regional Representatives of Ramsar's regions (now Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa, North America, and the Neotropics), and meets annually. The STRP provides guidance on key issues related to the application of the Convention. The Secretariat, based in Gland, Switzerland, coordinates the day-to-day activities of the Convention.

REPORT OF COP7

On Monday, 10 May 1999, Delmar Blasco, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention, welcomed delegates, highlighting the importance of COP7 in conducting a detailed review of implementation and remaining challenges, establishing clearly defined objectives for the next three years, and enabling CPs to achieve progress in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. He stressed that the Convention should not move away from protecting wetlands as aquatic areas for birdlife, but should also be seen within the broader context of sustainable development. He stated that COP7 would broach many crucial issues relevant to today's international agenda, and stressed that while Ramsar cannot act in isolation, discussions must remain relevant to the Ramsar context and to wetlands to ensure the COP's success. He expressed hope that the many resolutions before the COP would advance the objective of mainstreaming wetlands and making them a common concern for governments as well as society at large.

Jonathan A. Kusi, Director of UNESCO's Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, on behalf of UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor, highlighted the Convention's progress and Ramsar's working relationship with the World Heritage Convention (WHC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). He highlighted the MOU to be signed at COP7 between Ramsar and the WHC. He stressed the critical role of wetlands in abating the global water crisis and encouraged Ramsar to improve understanding of the economic value of wetlands, continue pursuing an ecosystem approach to wetland management, and enhance public education on wetlands.

IUCN Director-General Maritta R. Von Bieberstein Koch-Weser spoke on behalf of the four International Partner Organizations (IPOs) of the Convention. She highlighted links between wetlands, natural disasters and water management, and noted that the growing frequency of natural disasters, along with increasing mismanagement of natural resources, has created social and economic insecurity. She urged CPs to: consider a new vision for the Ramsar List; report on damage and ecological change in Ramsar sites and establish multi-stakeholder committees to monitor such change; promote alternative approaches to planning and management of natural resources and water; finance wise use programmes; and reward the Bureau's effective management to enable them to make further gains in Convention implementation.

Elizabeth Odio Benito, Vice President and Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, reaffirmed Costa Rica's commitment to the Convention's objectives. She highlighted the role of wetlands in

the water cycle and the urgent need to address the global water crisis. She urged CPs to propose recommendations that will advance efforts to ensure water quality and availability. She expressed hope that COP7 would renew the commitments made at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to achieve sustainable development, combat poverty as the greatest predator of the environment, and place humans at the center of development.

Secretary-General Blasco presented the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards to the following individuals and consortia: Professor Vitaly G. Krivenko (Russian Federation); Victor Pulido (Peru); the Lake Naivasha Riparian Association (Kenya); the Society for the Protection of Prespa (Greece); and the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (Canada).

Miguel Angel Rodriguez, President of Costa Rica, highlighted Costa Rica's efforts to implement fiscal incentives to encourage mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and conservation of forests, water resources and biodiversity. He stated that the notion that economic growth is incompatible with environmental protection is no longer widely held. Noting that the international community has recognized a series of environmental services that protect natural resources for present and future generations, he stressed that the marketing of such services can facilitate sustainable development.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Louise Lakos, Chair of the Convention's Standing Committee (SC), presented the COP7 agenda (COP7 DOC.1, Rev.2), which delegates adopted with minor amendments. She also presented the rules of procedure (COP7 DOC.2), noting that they had been revised to conform with those of other international environmental conventions.

INDIA stated that Ramsar needs to be brought in line with the post-Rio conventions, either by amending it or negotiating a protocol to address issues relating to a financial mechanism, rules of procedure, the Secretariat's role, a dispute settlement mechanism, provision of financial resources and technology transfer to developing countries as agreed at Rio, and review of implementation of the Convention's provisions. She recommended that an expert group investigate these issues. Secretary-General Blasco said these are matters for amending the Convention and suggested that if CPs want to address these issues, they should be put forward in a draft resolution. Delegates adopted the rules of procedure with minor amendments.

Delegates then elected Elizabeth Odio Benito (Costa Rica) as President of COP7 and Kezimbira Miyingo (Uganda) and Veit Koester (Denmark) as Vice Presidents. They approved nominations for representatives of Togo, Canada, Mongolia, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Guatemala and Australia as members of the COP's Credentials Committee. Regarding admission of observers, delegates adopted the list of registered observers (COP7 DOC.3), with amendments to include Rwanda and UNEP.

Louise Lakos presented the Report of the Chair of the SC (COP7 DOC.4), detailing the main issues and decisions taken at the SC's four meetings held since COP6. Noting that the Ramsar Convention has changed remarkably over the past three years, she called on governments to capitalize on this by strengthening and further improving national implementation of the Convention. She observed that the Strategic Plan adopted at COP6 is an efficient tool of the Convention that places emphasis on education and public awareness, capacity building for all stakeholders, strengthened partnerships with other conventions and catalytic roles in generating funds for wetlands.

Makoto Komoda, member of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), introduced the Report of the Chair of the STRP (COP7 DOC.4, Annex). He outlined the main issues addressed during the STRP's meetings since COP6 and highlighted the Panel's recommen-



dations, including: regrouping the criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance into those based on biogeographic representativeness or uniqueness and those based on biological diversity; amending the working definitions of "ecological character" and "change in ecological character;" and applying the update of Ramsar Information Sheets to all sites designated before 31 December 1990.

Secretary-General Blasco presented the Report of the Secretary-General on the current status of Convention implementation (COP7 DOC.5). He noted progress made since COP6 in: implementation of the Convention in several CPs; effective functioning of the Convention's mechanisms; the broadening of the approach to wetland issues; cooperation with the Convention's International Partner Organizations and other institutions; and improvement of the Convention's standing at the international level and its working relations with other environment and development-related treaties. He emphasized that many challenges remain, such as increasing the number of CPs using the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 as a planning tool.

In the ensuing days, the delegates heard overviews of implementation in Ramsar's regions, as well as several special presentations. Delegates then met in five technical sessions over the course of two-and-a-half days on topics of significance to the Convention. They convened in two additional Plenary sessions to consider the contentious issue of regional categorization of countries under the Convention. The final two days of COP7 were devoted to the consideration and adoption of the COP's 30 resolutions and four recommendations. The following report summarizes the proceedings as well as the resolutions and recommendations agreed at COP7.

REGIONAL OVERVIEWS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Delegates reviewed implementation of the Convention in Ramsar's regions in Plenary on Tuesday and Wednesday, 11-12 May.

AFRICA: Anada Tiega, Regional Coordinator for Africa, noted significant progress made and identified challenges to implementation in the African region, including the need to: increase the membership of African countries to the Convention; define suitable methodologies for wetland inventories; coordinate between different sectors that have an impact on wetlands; operationalize the synergies between Ramsar and other international processes; make river basin organizations more responsive to user needs; define a common approach to manage shared wetlands; address wetland degradation at the source; and implement wise use practices. He identified the major threats to wetlands as inappropriate land-use practices, the increased prevalence of invasive species and pollution.

WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE: Tim Jones, Regional Coordinator for Europe, highlighted achievements in implementing the wise use guidelines in the region, including: wide application of environmental impact assessment (EIA); high priority assigned to restoration; and significant progress in implementing wetland policies and establishing national committees. Challenges in implementing wise use include the need for better integration of wetland policies into other sectors, mainstreaming of economic valuation, and stronger links with the private sector. He reported progress in implementing wetland education and public awareness (EPA) programmes, particularly those run by NGOs, and an increase in training opportunities. However, EPA programmes in Eastern Europe require greater government support, and there is a need to review and improve access to training. He highlighted a large number of designated Ramsar sites, but observed that despite significant progress, management plans have yet to be initiated for many sites, and most CPs have not completed full inventories of their wetlands. He said there are a number of transboundary sites and initiatives in the region, but stressed the need for better integration of wetland conservation into management of transboundary rivers.

NEOTROPICS: Nestor Windevoxhel, COP7 Special Advisor, said the main achievements in the Neotropical region since COP6 include increased attention to the conservation and rehabilitation of degraded wetlands, actions to enhance EPA, and development of management plans for one-third of Neotropical Ramsar sites. He identified priorities for action, including: promoting transboundary and regional actions; strengthening efforts to integrate conservation and wise use of wetlands in planning and management at all levels; encouraging inclusion of wetland themes in school curricula; and developing comprehensive strategies to complete the identification of training needs and adopt a coordinated approach to sharing training resources and expertise.

NORTH AMERICA: Bill Phillips, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ramsar Secretariat, presented progress in the North American region, including, *inter alia*: a wide range of EIA and wetland-related policy instruments; integrated and watershed approaches; experimentation with assessments and economic valuation of wetlands; wetland restoration initiatives; institutional capacities and cooperation; bilateral agreements on migratory birds; and donor assistance for wetlands projects. Challenges to implementation in the region include the need to: finalize reviews of national policy frameworks and site management plans; continue rehabilitation efforts; complete inventories; build national networks of Ramsar sites; and pursue transboundary site designations.

OCEANIA: Bill Phillips also provided an overview of implementation in the Oceania region. He highlighted achievements in implementing wise use guidelines, including development of wetland policy frameworks and use of EIA and economic valuation. Challenges in implementing wise use include the need to assist CPs to implement the Convention, build capacity, and utilize wise use frameworks. On communication and cooperation, he reported progress in EPA campaigns and multilateral initiatives. He underscored the need to promote wetlands in educational curricula and systematic training. He noted the designation of four new Ramsar sites and active NGO involvement, but stressed the need to designate under-represented habitat sites and further promote twinning arrangements.

ASIA: Rebecca D'Cruz, Regional Coordinator for Asia, indicated that the Ramsar Bureau treats Israel as an Asian CP but that this issue requires COP7 resolution. She said progress was mixed and identified significant challenges, including the need to: increase membership in Central and West Asia; enhance NGO involvement; mainstream wetlands into water and coastal zone policies; designate additional sites, particularly under-represented wetland types; complete site management plans; enhance training; and monitor changes in ecological character.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Delegates convened in five technical sessions between Thursday afternoon and Saturday evening, 13-15 May. The technical sessions began with panel presentations on the topic and introduction of relevant COP7 resolutions. Delegates then met in regionally-based discussion groups to consider these relevant resolutions, and their proposals for amendments were integrated by drafting groups coordinated by the Bureau. The following is a summary of the technical sessions.

RAMSAR AND WATER: Malti Sinha (India), Technical Session Chair, said the session's aim was to produce recommendations on the draft resolution, "Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management."

Peter Bacon, Professor of Zoology, University of the West Indies, gave a presentation on the role of wetlands in the water cycle, emphasizing the important role of wetland conservation in alleviating the global water crisis, as wetlands are fundamental to the global hydro-



logical cycle, and the sites that support many resources needed for socioeconomic development. He said the challenge is to develop a methodology for managing wetlands to maximize water availability while ensuring wetland biodiversity and sustainability.

C. Trisal, Alternate STRP member for Asia, presented the draft resolution on "Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management" (COP7 DOC 15.19). He noted the absence of clear guidance from Ramsar on how to integrate wetlands into river basin management and stated that recent human-induced disasters signal the need for new approaches. He highlighted linkages between wetlands, water and river basin management in the Convention, and said the Guidelines are intended to assist CPs in integrating wetlands into river basin management. He detailed guidelines for, *inter alia*: establishing river basin management authorities and strengthening institutional capacity; involving stakeholders and raising public awareness; assessing and enhancing wetlands' hydrological and ecological functions; minimizing impacts of land use and water projects; protecting and restoring wetlands in the context of river basin management; promoting international cooperation on shared river basins and wetlands; and collaborating with relevant conventions and organizations.

Enrique Alonzo Garcia, Spanish Ministry of Environment, outlined Spain's experience with water policy and wetland management. He said it was imperative that CPs review their wetland policies in the context of water policies, using broader geographical and integrated approaches. He highlighted past shortcomings in Spain's wetland policies, including: erroneous perceptions of wetlands as biodiversity reservoirs with definite boundaries; neglect of aquifers and downstream coastal wetlands; exclusion of wetlands from water policies; and weak protection of Ramsar sites. Spain's current approach focuses on, *inter alia*: inventorying and rehabilitating all wetland types; mapping risks and pollution sources; maintaining minimum riparian ecological functions; combining ecological and economic valuation; and integrating wetlands into inter-sectoral biodiversity, forest and water strategies.

Juan Schnack, Museo de La Plata, Argentina, gave a presentation on Ramsar's role in responding to the global water crisis. He said the Convention must respond to this crisis by: promoting EPA; strengthening environmental agencies' management capacity; expanding scientific research; strengthening cooperation with environmental conventions; adopting regional planning; developing and applying EIA; adopting new criteria for classifying wetlands; and implementing contingency plans for emergency situations affecting water quality. He stressed that there must be greater equity in meeting basic needs and increased awareness of decision makers and the public if the Convention will efficiently address the water crisis.

Tian Zhujun, Ministry of Water Resources, China, outlined measures for China's wetland rehabilitation after the 1998 flooding. He highlighted negative ecological character changes from flooding in four Ramsar sites, and described mitigation and rehabilitation measures.

Claude Martin, Director-General of WWF International, made a presentation on WWF's Living Waters Campaign, which aims to raise awareness on water resource conservation, demonstrate sustainable approaches to freshwater management, and increase by 50% the area of the world's freshwater ecosystems newly committed for protection, restoration or effective management.

NATIONAL PLANNING FOR WETLAND CONSERVATION AND WISE USE: Marie Odile Goth (France), Technical Session Chair, stressed the importance of reviewing national regulatory frameworks and using technical guidelines. She said laws and

administrative practices should curb further damage and encourage wetland rehabilitation. She called for the designation of under-represented and internationally important wetlands and the establishment of an international wetlands network that is qualitatively different from the Ramsar List.

Sara Diop, SC Representative for Africa, presented the draft resolution, "Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance" (COP7 DOC.15.11). He said the proposed strategic approach for designating these wetlands aims to establish an international network of wetlands, based on scientific criteria with a target of 2000 sites by COP9.

Clayton Rubec, Canadian Wildlife Service, made a presentation on the guidelines for developing and implementing National Wetland Policies (NWP) (COP7 DOC.15.6). He highlighted progress in the development and implementation of NWPs in CPs, noting that few have stand-alone wetland policies, although many are in preparation. He emphasized that there are many mechanisms to promote wetland conservation and wise use, including biodiversity strategies and environmental policies. He said the guidelines are intended to encourage CPs to develop NWPs, review the success of governments and partners in their development and implementation, and foster the sharing of experience.

Clare Shine, IUCN Environmental Law Center, presented the "Guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands" (COP7 DOC.17.3). She recalled that CPs are urged to conduct legal and institutional reviews to identify and remove constraints to conservation and wise use, and support the development of positive legal and institutional frameworks for wise use. Noting that few CPs have wetland policies in place and that many policies relevant to wetland conservation have been implemented in a piecemeal fashion, she stressed the importance of mainstreaming wise use into all sectors of national legislation. She said the first step of such a review is to collect information on existing wetland-related measures and sectoral measures that directly or indirectly affect wetlands. The review should assess the effectiveness of the former in promoting conservation and wise use, and analyze the means by which the latter have an impact on wetlands. The review should then recommend legal and institutional changes necessary to support conservation and wise use, including the phase-out of measures that contribute to wetland loss, improvement of implementation of existing laws, and identification and prioritization of laws and institutions that require reform.

Hans Skotte Moller, Danish National Forest and Nature Agency, discussed restoration as an element in national planning for wetland conservation and wise use. He noted that rehabilitation of modified and degraded wetlands was taking place in numerous Ramsar CPs, but that efforts were scattered and rarely integrated into national legislation and planning. He outlined elements essential to decisions on whether to restore wetlands, including, *inter alia*: the type of environmental benefits expected; biodiversity and hydroecological aspects; support from local land-owners and resources users; possibilities for ecotourism; and cultural history concerns. He proposed general guidelines for wetland rehabilitation, including legislative obligations or options for multiple wetland restoration; identification of all stakeholders; scientific consultations; and cost-effectiveness. He observed that wetlands may be the first major ecosystem rehabilitated by humankind on a global scale.

INVOLVING PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS IN THE CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS: Larry Mason (US), Technical Session Chair, highlighted the importance of communication, education and awareness in ensuring effective local community involvement.



Victor Pulido, National Wetland Programme of Peru, discussed participatory processes to involve local communities and indigenous people in wetland management. He outlined methods for local community involvement, including: engaging elected representatives; consulting with local communities to review and revise management plans; and delegating wetland management tasks. He noted that effective participation requires, *inter alia*: developing and implementing incentives for wise use; building confidence and trust based on mutual respect and effective communication; ensuring flexibility and adaptability in responding to individual cases; ensuring continuity through an iterative process; enabling legislative frameworks; securing adequate funding; and generating high-level political support.

Esther Camac, Mesoamerican Indigenous Knowledge Programme, presented recommendations from the recent Indigenous Peoples' Regional Workshop held in Chiapas, Mexico, including, strengthening ties between Ramsar and the CBD; creating a focal point in the Ramsar Secretariat on traditional indigenous knowledge of wetland management; declaring wetland sites inhabited by indigenous peoples to be Wetlands of International Importance; placing control of these areas in indigenous peoples' hands; recognizing the crucial role of women in all aspects of wetland conservation; and encouraging cooperation between governments and indigenous peoples in conserving wetlands.

Louise Lakos, Hungarian Ministry for the Environment, discussed promotion of participatory wetland and river basin management through education and understanding. She provided an overview of the Outreach Programme 1999-2002 and noted that it comprises international and national EPA programmes aimed at changing practices that impede wetland conservation and wise use. The Programme should be tailored to local priorities and target civil society, the business and education sectors, and regional and international bodies, and involve numerous actors, including CPs, the Secretariat, NGOs and donors.

Chris Richmond, New Zealand Department of Conservation, presented the draft resolution, "Incentive measures to encourage the application of the Wise Use Principles" (COP7 DOC.18.3). He drew attention to the work programme under the CBD on incentives and supported ongoing assessment of incentive programmes. He emphasized the importance of motivating governments, local people and international organizations to conserve biodiversity, and stressed the need to assess local situations in developing the most effective mix of incentive tools for each wetland site. He noted that the draft resolution calls on CPs to, *inter alia*, review existing policy, legal and institutional frameworks to identify and promote effective measures and remove perverse incentives, and share lessons learned.

TOOLS FOR ASSESSING AND RECOGNIZING WETLAND VALUES: Gordana Beltram (Slovenia), Technical Session Chair, highlighted the need for broader assessment of policies, programmes and plans to ensure that they do not promote or allow wetland destruction. She underscored the need to go beyond narrow EIA and include social and economic impacts of converting wetlands.

Andrea Bagri, IUCN Economic Services Unit, discussed Ramsar and impact assessment. She said impact assessments have been identified as key tools for assisting countries in implementing various conventions, including Ramsar, the CBD, CMS and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). She outlined: the role of strategic environmental assessments; the linkages between impact assessments and wetland monitoring and assessment; the use of impact assessments as opportunities to incorporate economic values in decision making; and collaboration between Ramsar and other biodiversity-related conventions. Noting that impact assessment processes can facilitate local and indigenous communities' participation in decision making, she said CPs should strengthen participatory procedures.

Max Finlayson, Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist, discussed the Wetland Risk Assessment Framework (COP7 DOC.15.10, Annex I). He noted the STRP's work on early warning indicators to predict and assess change in ecological character. He said wetland risk assessment involves a series of steps to predict and monitor adverse change and should identify the nature, effects, seriousness, and extent of potential risks. He explained that such assessment enables the formulation of risk management and reduction strategies and facilitates monitoring. He said indicators should be anticipatory, predictive, sensitive, cost-effective, diagnostic, socially relevant, non-destructive, and applied in a timely manner.

Nick Davidson, Wetlands International, presented a global review of wetland resources and priorities for wetland inventory. He said the review's key finding was that inventories are incomplete and difficult to undertake. Only 7% of countries currently have adequate national wetland inventories; a majority have partial inventories, some have no inventory coverage of their wetlands, and inventories generally contain little information on wetlands' status and trends. He stated that a wholly reliable estimate of global wetland resources cannot yet be made using existing inventories. The review made several recommendations, including: prioritize national inventories where they are inadequate; conduct basic inventories prior to collecting management-oriented information; develop global standardized methods; establish a central repository for inventories; and extend support for the completion of the global review of wetland resources and priorities for wetland inventory.

Suzanne Palminteri, Biodiversity Conservation Specialist, discussed how user-friendly geographic information systems (GIS) can assist wetland site-level managers to assimilate and interpret data for addressing management questions. She noted that, in contrast to costly and complicated high-end GIS technology, site-level GIS is available for less than US\$1000, simple to teach and learn, and valuable for spatial wetland management. She described how user-friendly GIS can: guide wetland resource and land-use planning through data layering at multiple spatial scales; answer specific management questions such as where to focus research, ecotourism and protection efforts; conduct spatial analyses, such as measuring and intersecting information on species and habitat distributions; monitor and model wetland habitat changes using field-generated data; and communicate key relationships and situations to site managers, local communities, politicians and the public.

FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION REGARDING WETLANDS: Nasyon Moses Biliho (Ghana), Chair of the Technical Session, said the Convention is an act of international cooperation that sets CPs on new paths and presents new challenges.

Javier Beltran, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, presented the preliminary findings of a GIS analysis of the world's shared wetlands and river basins. The project identified Ramsar sites that are vulnerable, cross-border or within close proximity of a border, and located within international catchment basins. It also assessed the need for international cooperation directed at broad areas of wetland habitat. He highlighted areas requiring further work, including: analysis of risks in vulnerable sites; assessment of the extent of wetlands designated as protected areas; prioritization of coastal marine wetland habitats; and assessment of the management regimes of cross-border sites.

Maureen Ballester, International Network of Basin Organizations, spoke on international cooperation through river basin commissions. She reiterated gaps that need to be filled in the international legal framework on shared water resources and recommended expanding international legal provisions by, including *inter alia*: promoting the



principles of polluter pays and limited territorial sovereignty with respect to water resources; developing an International Water Charter; establishing a means of appeal and reconciliation through an International Water Tribunal under the aegis of a UN agency and the International Court of Justice; and forming a global forum for international river protocols and commissions through gradual approaches that consider technical issues prior to political ones.

Stevie Monna, Botswana National Conservation Strategy Agency, discussed the framework for international cooperation to manage the Okavango River, shared by Angola, Botswana and Namibia. He said the Okavango Delta is one of the world's largest remaining inland wetland ecosystems and is threatened by overgrazing, water use for development, the absence of a comprehensive management plan, and post-civil war resettlement. He said Botswana is collaborating with the Ramsar Bureau to develop a delta management plan that can be integrated into a plan for the entire Okavango Basin. He described the Permanent Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM) established by the riparian states to coordinate and collaborate on sustainable management. He said OKACOM has completed a transboundary diagnostic assessment as part of its baseline data development and is seeking GEF support for a basin-wide environmental assessment and integrated management plan.

Cheah Kong Wai, SC Representative for Asia, presented "Guidelines for international cooperation under the Convention" (COP7 DOC.15.20). He noted a growing recognition of the value of multi-State river basin management commissions, and said the guidelines seek to foster such commissions to facilitate cooperation. The guidelines also encourage CPs to, *inter alia*: identify all shared wetlands and river basins and develop appropriate cooperative management arrangements; participate in regional frameworks on shared wetland-dependent species; harmonize national implementation of environmental conventions; support training of wetland practitioners; encourage site twinning to accelerate sharing of expertise; review all trade in wetland products to ensure sustainable harvesting; establish cooperative arrangements with relevant CITES and CBD focal points; urge the assessment of impacts of foreign investment proposals; and promote codes of conduct for the private sector.

Faizal Parish, Global Environment Centre, outlined the results of a project examining existing donor arrangements for wetland conservation and wise use. The project highlights a major decrease in bilateral funding since 1992, an increase in multilateral support for wetlands and in the number of environmental projects, and the integration of environmental considerations into donors' sectoral strategies. He said the analysis was constrained by slow responses from the development assistance community and the lack of reporting systems that specifically categorize wetland conservation projects. He outlined recommendations and guidelines for enhancing and monitoring funding for wetland conservation and its consideration in sectoral strategies and development programmes, and building the capacities of development assistance agencies and recipients. He underscored the need for a coordination mechanism between the Bureau, national Ramsar focal points and development agencies.

CLOSING PLENARY

Delegates convened in the closing Plenary of COP7 on Tuesday afternoon, 18 May.

They elected the following CPs to serve on the SC for the next triennium, based on proposals from each region: Togo, Algeria, Uganda, India, Japan, Norway, Slovakia, France, Armenia, Mexico, Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, and Australia. It was noted that Costa Rica would remain on the SC as the outgoing COP host. President

Benito noted that this new SC would meet immediately following the close of COP7 and would designate the countries to act as its Chair and Vice Chair, as well as those to serve on its Subgroup on Finance.

Regarding the date and venue of the COP's next ordinary meeting, President Benito noted that Spain had offered to host COP8, which should take place in 2002. SPAIN reiterated its offer, recognizing the financial, organizational and logistical efforts required to launch the Convention in the new millennium on a sure footing. No other invitations were forthcoming, and delegates accepted Spain's invitation by acclamation. President Benito noted that by way of this decision, Spain became a member of the SC.

Secretary-General Blasco then presented the draft report of COP7, noting that it was more abbreviated than that of COP6 but reflected the COP7 proceedings and had been considered and amended by the Conference Committee. He noted that some sections remained to be added, but that the final COP7 report would include a list of attending CPs, notes on the Plenary sessions, the report of the Credentials Committee, and annexes containing the lists of resolutions and recommendations adopted at COP7, observer States and organizations represented, and documents distributed for the COP. Following a number of minor amendments, the final report was adopted.

In his closing remarks, Secretary-General Blasco stated that COP7 had been intense and productive. He emphasized that in technical terms, the Convention had been significantly strengthened by the battery of tools that delegates had adopted. He noted, however, that on some issues, COP7 had not managed to find a solution that fully satisfied all CPs. He expressed his gratitude to Costa Rica for its hospitality and to all who contributed to the COP's success. He emphasized the challenges that lie ahead, and called on delegates to put the resolutions agreed at COP7 into practice, pledging his continued commitment and dedication to assist in this regard.

The regional representatives from Oceania, North America, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Neotropics expressed their thanks to the Government and people of Costa Rica, the Bureau, the SC and particularly outgoing Chair Louise Lakos, the President and Vice Presidents of COP7, the interpreters, the international NGO partners and other participating NGOs, and all delegates that participated in a spirit of cooperation. BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, on behalf of the four IPOs, saluted delegates on the significant outcomes of COP7 and paid special tribute to Louise Lakos' excellent chairing of the SC. He said CPs had adopted a Strategic Framework and thus could not be criticized for not having the tools to implement the Convention. He noted that, regrettably, the COP had adopted a budget that meets only part of the Convention's requirements, and stressed the need for additional voluntary contributions to supplement the budget. He urged CPs to translate the ambitious COP7 agreements into action, and pledged the IPOs' commitment to continue playing a role in facing the Convention's challenges in the new millennium.

JAPAN WETLANDS ACTION NETWORK, on behalf of other NGOs and indigenous peoples, noted that the continued growth in NGO participation at Ramsar COPs indicates that Ramsar offers a path to implementing wise use at the site level. She underscored the critical importance of involving local and indigenous communities as partners, stressing that the Bureau and governments alone cannot ensure implementation of the Convention. She urged CPs not to forget the vital role of small community-based NGOs in linking Ramsar policies to site-level action.

Louise Lakos, Chair of the SC, thanked delegates for their words of appreciation and said she was honored to have worked with them over the past six years. She wished delegates and the Ramsar Convention the greatest success. COP7 President Elizabeth Odio Benito expressed



her gratitude to delegates, Secretary-General Blasco and SC Chair Louise Lakos on behalf of the Government and people of Costa Rica. She urged participants to make the vital link between people and wetlands come alive. She quoted an old Chinese proverb: "If you want to be happy one day, get drunk. If you want to be happy for three days, get married. But if you want to be happy for the rest of your life, plant a garden." In this spirit, she called on delegates to ensure the care of wetlands in the 21st century and drew COP7 to a close at 5:30 pm.

COP7 RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the course of COP7, delegates considered 30 resolutions and four recommendations in Plenary and technical sessions. The majority of the resolutions and recommendations were prepared in advance by the Bureau and its consultants, and were amended and approved for COP7 presentation by the SC at its 21st meeting in October 1998. A number of resolutions and recommendations were sponsored by CPs, and these either had to be submitted to the Bureau for approval for COP7 consideration by 10 March 1999, or to arise from discussions at COP7. The majority of the draft resolutions and recommendations were distributed to delegates for their consideration in advance of COP7. The following is a summary of the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the COP, including highlights of substantial amendments.

REGIONAL CATEGORIZATION OF COUNTRIES UNDER THE CONVENTION, AND COMPOSITION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE:

Delegates convened in two additional Plenary sessions, on Tuesday evening, 11 May, and Thursday morning, 13 May, to consider the draft resolution on regional categorization of countries under the Convention and the composition, roles and responsibilities of the SC (COP7 DOC. 15.1). Louise Lakos, Chair of the SC, introduced the draft resolution. It was explained that when Israel acceded to the Convention in 1997, the Bureau, according to its standard practice, automatically assigned it to the Asian region. This practice was subsequently challenged by Iran, alternate Asian Representative in the SC, during the 20th meeting of the SC in late 1997 and again during the Pan-Asian Regional Meeting in February 1999. The SC established a subgroup to review regional categorization procedures under the Convention, the results of which were reflected in this draft resolution.

Lakos drew delegates' attention to two options for two bracketed paragraphs, on the groupings for regional categorization and on procedures for allocating CPs into regional groups. On regional categorization, the first option (the SC Chair's proposal) employed the biogeographic regions of Africa, Asia, the Neotropics, Europe, North America, and Oceania. The second option (Iran's proposal) used the UN system's regional categorization of Africa, Asia and Pacific, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and Others, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The two options for allocation procedures included the SC Chair's proposal that CPs near the boundaries of the allocated region can exercise their sovereign right to participate within an alternative region upon formal notification to the COP, and Iran's proposal for continued deliberations by the subgroup on regional categorization on preparation of an indicative allocation of CPs.

IRAN stressed that a decision on categorization should consider regional and political realities and the interests of States concerned. MALAYSIA, PAKISTAN and SYRIA supported the Iranian proposal to use the UN system of regional grouping. GERMANY, URUGUAY, NICARAGUA, AUSTRALIA, SLOVENIA and MACEDONIA supported the SC Chair's proposal advocating groupings based on biogeographic concerns.

On allocation procedures, GERMANY proposed an amendment to allow CPs located near boundaries of regions to participate, at their own request and based on the existence of similar natural conditions, within an alternative region, provided that the STRP does not object to the preconditions for the request. IRAN proposed establishing an open-ended working group to resolve the categorization issue. VENEZUELA, CANADA and ISRAEL instead called for a vote on the two options. The Chair concluded that informal consultations should proceed without a working group.

On Thursday morning, 13 May, delegates reconvened to take a decision on the issue. The Chair reported that intensive informal consultations over the preceding two days had failed to produce consensus, and proposed that delegates first consider voting on Germany's amendment, then proceed to vote on the two options for regional categorization. SYRIA sought clarification regarding the status of an amendment it had submitted to the Secretariat prior to the SC's meeting that morning. The Plenary engaged in an extensive debate over procedural questions regarding whether Syria's amendment should be considered, given Tuesday's ruling that only those proposals presented on Tuesday evening would be considered unless a new proposal was based on consensus. Syria's proposal, which placed Israel in Europe and maintained the other bio-geographical regions, was distributed, and the Plenary voted on whether to consider it. Twenty-two voted in favor and 46 against, with 35 abstentions.

IRAN withdrew its proposal for the second part of the bracketed option, to instruct the subgroup on regional categorization to continue its deliberations on indicative allocations. The Plenary adopted by consensus the German proposal on allowing a CP to request to participate in an alternative region. Delegates then considered the two bracketed options for regional groupings. IRAN subsequently withdrew its proposal to use the UN regional groupings, and the Plenary adopted the remaining proposal of the SC Chair for the regional groups of Africa, Asia, the Neotropics, Europe, North America, and Oceania. ISRAEL formally notified the COP of its request to participate temporarily within the European region, while remaining a member of its geographical region of Asia. SYRIA noted that consensus did not signify unanimity and disassociated himself from the consensus.

In the final resolution, the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the above as the regional groups of the Convention;
- decides to introduce a proportional system for the composition of the SC;
- further decides that the regional SC representatives shall be elected by the COP based on regional group nominations;
- recommends that CPs in regional groups with one SC representative use a rotation system for nomination and that regional groups with two or more representatives seek to achieve biogeographical, geopolitical and cultural balance in their selection;
- determines that the SC's functions include, *inter alia*, preparing issues for consideration at the next COP, supervising implementation of policy by the Bureau, providing advice to the Bureau on Convention implementation, and adopting operational guidelines for the SGF for each triennium; and
- decides that the SC shall be governed, *mutatis mutandis*, by the COP's rules of procedure.

The resolution contains two annexes: allocation of CPs and non-CPs to the six Ramsar regional groups, and tasks of CPs elected as regional representatives in the SC.

COMPOSITION AND MODUS OPERANDI OF THE STRP:

This resolution (COP7 DOC. 15.2) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with several amendments, including the Neotropics region's



proposal that the STRP's composition should reflect the different biogeographic characteristics within each Ramsar region and that STRP members, to the extent possible, come from countries not represented in the SC. As no preparations had been made for COP7 to elect the STRP Chair, the Plenary agreed that the STRP should elect its own. The final resolution states that the COP decides to introduce modifications to the STRP's *modus operandi* and composition to, *inter alia*: invite each CP to nominate by the end of October 1999 a qualified expert from that country to act as a focal point and provide input to the STRP's work, as appropriate; urge STRP members to establish and maintain contact with these national focal points and seek their input as required; and invite several organizations to participate as observers at STRP meetings and consider working cooperative arrangements. The COP further decides that membership of the STRP for the next triennium shall be: Aboubacar Awaiiss (Niger), Geoff Cowan (South Africa), Harry Chabwela (Zambia), M. Shatanawi (Jordan), A. Alcalá (Philippines), Jan Pokorný (Czech Republic), K. Saat (Estonia), George Zalidis (Greece), Peter Maitland (UK), Yara Schaeffer (Brazil), Jorge Jiménez (Costa Rica), Arthur Hawkins (US), Max Finlayson (Australia) and two substitutes, Randy Milton (Canada) and Bronwen Golder (New Zealand).

PARTNERSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.3) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with minor amendments. The final resolution notes the significant contribution made by a number of NGOs in the inception, development and application of the Convention. It states that the COP: adopts rules for formalizing the Convention's relations with these NGOs by conferring on them the status of IPO of the Convention; confirms this status for Birdlife International, IUCN, Wetlands International, and the WWF; decides that other international NGOs interested in formal recognition as Convention partners can apply to the Bureau, which will include it on the agenda for the SC's meeting, which in turn will make a recommendation for the COP's final decision; and further decides that IPOs' performance may be reviewed by CPs when considered necessary. The annex to the resolution sets out rules and criteria for NGOs seeking a formal partnership.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING HARMONIZED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURES: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.4) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with minor amendments. The final resolution notes the benefits from synergies and integrated implementation, where appropriate, of environment-related conventions. It states that the COP:

- urges CPs to Ramsar and the CBD to develop projects relating to inland water ecosystems suitable for consideration by the GEF;
- requests the Ramsar Bureau to give priority, as resources allow, to development of joint actions with the CMS, implementation of the Memoranda of Cooperation (MOC) with the CCD and the WHC, and development of a MOC with the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC);
- calls on CPs to relevant conventions to enhance coordinated implementation of these treaties, where appropriate, so wetland conservation and wise use can be considered within the broader sustainable development framework; and
- directs the STRP to exchange information, cooperate and coordinate activities with the equivalent bodies of the CBD, CMS, CCD and relevant regional fora, as appropriate. The resolution contains three annexes: the Ramsar-CBD Joint Work Plan, the MOC between the Ramsar Bureau and the CCD Secretariat, and the MOU between Ramsar and the WHC.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE SMALL GRANTS FUND AND ITS FUTURE OPERATIONS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.5) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with minor amendments, including WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL's proposal that future SC reviews of the Small Grants Fund (SGF) include evaluation of its mechanisms for project monitoring and evaluation, and the NETHERLANDS' proposal to consider the possibility of SGF management by one of the Convention's IPOs. The final resolution notes that the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 directed that the SGF should undergo a critical evaluation, and states that the COP expresses its conviction that the SGF review demonstrates its value for facilitating Convention implementation in developing countries and countries in transition. The COP also:

- reiterates that the resources available to the SGF should be increased to at least US\$1 million annually;
- urges that a mechanism be developed for receiving commitments of contributions to the SGF and requests the SC and its Subgroup on Finance to seek its initiation;
- decides that SGF funding for new projects should be conditional upon compliance with reporting requirements for previous grants to the same country;
- decides that, to improve monitoring and evaluation, the Bureau should allocate staff time to project evaluation, and Administrative Authorities in CPs should monitor progress and evaluate final reports; and
- authorizes the SC to continue to evaluate the SGF's functioning and report to COP8.

The critical evaluation of the SGF undertaken by the Bureau, which summarizes projects funded, positive features and challenges for the SGF in the future, is annexed to the resolution.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL WETLAND POLICIES: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.6) was considered by the Technical Session on National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use on Friday, 14 May, and in Plenary on Monday, 17 May. It was adopted with minor amendments. The final resolution notes that 77 CPs have national wetland policies or strategies in place or under development, and recognizes that development of policies and related initiatives may require efforts to build capacity where resources need to be augmented. It states that the COP adopts the guidelines as guidance for CPs on NWPs, and urges CPs that have yet to develop such policies to prioritize the matter. It encourages CPs to recognize the benefits of incorporating appropriate measures to ensure priority consideration for wetland restoration in relevant programme administration and government expenditure and in promotion of local actions. It further urges CPs with experience in developing and implementing NWPs to share this knowledge and experience with other CPs.

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.7) was considered by the Technical Session on National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use on Friday, 14 May, and in Plenary on Monday, 17 May. It was adopted with minor amendments. The final resolution states that the COP adopts the guidelines for reviewing relevant laws and institutions as guidance for CPs. It encourages CPs undertaking or planning reviews to ensure that they aim to remove constraints to conservation and wise use implementation and seek to introduce incentive measures as part of legislation and administration. It urges development assistance agencies to give priority to supporting projects that will result in the application of these guidelines in developing countries and those in economic transition.



GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES' AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF WETLANDS:

This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.8) was considered by the Technical Session on Involving People at All Levels in the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands on Friday, 14 May, and in Plenary on Monday, 17 May. Delegates adopted the text with numerous amendments submitted by the regionally-based discussion groups, including a statement that the term "indigenous people" may vary from country to country. The final resolution states that the COP:

- adopts the guidelines;
- calls on CPs to apply these guidelines, giving special attention to involving women, youth and their representative organizations;
- urges CPs to consult extensively with local communities and indigenous people in the formulation of NWP and legislation, ensuring consistency with the guidelines;
- further urges CPs to create, as appropriate, the legal and policy context to facilitate indigenous people's and local communities' direct involvement in relevant national and local decision making;
- requests that CPs give priority to capacity building for the implementation of participatory processes;
- directs the Bureau to establish a clearinghouse, create a focal point, and liaise with other international organizations for information exchange on participatory approaches and indigenous knowledge systems and on other relevant topics, as resources allow; and
- urges the Bureau and partners to further elaborate on these guidelines by COP9 in light of new experiences.

The guidelines are annexed to the resolution.

OUTREACH PROGRAMME 1999-2002: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.9) was considered by the Technical Session on Involving People at All Levels in the Conservation and Wise Use of Wetlands on Friday, 14 May, and in Plenary on Monday, 17 May, where delegates adopted the resolution with several minor amendments. The final resolution states that the COP adopts the Outreach Programme 1999-2002 to provide guidance to key stakeholders in the development of appropriate communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) actions that support implementation of the Convention. The COP also requests CPs to nominate, by 31 December 1999, suitable government and NGO focal points for CEPA to undertake programme functions. The resolution also:

- encourages CPs to seek to have Wetland CEPA Action Plans in place by the end of 2000;
- directs the Bureau to establish a clearinghouse on the Convention's web site for wetland CEPA information;
- urges CPs to use World Wetlands Day and Week to highlight achievements and challenges in wetland conservation and wise use; and
- reiterates its strong support for the Wetland Link International initiative, urging potential sponsors to mobilize resources for the initiative.

The Outreach Programme 1999-2002 is annexed to the resolution.

WETLAND RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.10) was considered in the Technical Session on Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values on Saturday, 15 May, and adopted with minor amendments in Plenary on Monday, 17 May. The final resolution notes that the COP adopts the Risk Assessment Framework as guidance to CPs; adopts definitions for "ecological character" and "change in ecological character," as recommended by the STRP; calls on CPs to apply early warning indicators in the

monitoring and management plans of Ramsar sites; and encourages the STRP to compile a report outlining experiences gained in maintaining early warning systems.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIST OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:

This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.11) was considered in the Technical Session on National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use on Friday, 14 May and adopted with minor amendments in Plenary on Monday, 17 May. The strategic framework and guidelines establish a global network of internationally important wetlands and a "new outlook" on the Ramsar List. The final resolution notes that the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the strategic framework and guidelines;
- urges all CPs to apply the framework and develop a systematic approach to identifying wetlands for future Ramsar site designation at the national and, as appropriate, regional levels;
- invites CPs, IPOs and local community stakeholders to achieve the short-term target of 2000 Ramsar sites by COP9 in 2005;
- calls on CPs to prioritize wetland inventory programmes;
- encourages CPs to give prominence to suitable transboundary wetlands and those providing important habitat for migratory wetland-dependent species; and
- instructs the Bureau to draw the attention of the scientific and technical bodies of the CBD, CMS, CITES, WHC and CCD to the framework and guidelines and to seek appropriate future collaboration with implementation.

The strategic framework and guidelines are attached in an annex, including guidelines for a systematic approach to identifying priority wetlands, designation criteria, a glossary of terms, and the Ramsar Information Sheet format for site designations.

SITES IN THE RAMSAR LIST: OFFICIAL DESCRIPTIONS, CONSERVATION STATUS, AND MANAGEMENT PLANS, INCLUDING THE SITUATION OF PARTICULAR SITES:

This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.12) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. CHILE expressed concern with the proposal to increase the percentage of Ramsar sites in each CP required to have management plans in place or in preparation by COP8 from 50 to 75%. Delegates adopted the resolution with two amendments: GREECE's addition of an annex on Greek Ramsar Sites and a proposal by GERMANY, with POLAND and UKRAINE, noting that the construction of a waterway to link Germany, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine may have significant impacts on wetlands and inviting States concerned to undertake a full review and assessment of these impacts in accordance with international transboundary impact assessment procedures.

The final resolution states that the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes announcements in national reports for COP7 of extension of 11 existing sites and designation of 188 new ones from 44 CPs;
- expresses deep concern that official descriptions have not been provided or updated for several sites;
- agrees to raise the Convention's target for management planning at Ramsar sites to ensure that by COP8, management plans are in preparation or in place for at least three-quarters of the Ramsar sites in each CP;
- encourages CPs to adopt and apply suitable monitoring regimes as part of management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands;
- encourages CPs to consider employing the Convention's Management Planning Guidelines in developing wetland policies;
- calls upon certain CPs to submit site descriptions conforming with the Ramsar Information Sheet format, including suitable maps and



site updates;

- welcomes CP updates on the conservation status of Montreux Record sites; and
- directs the Bureau to document, publish and promote the “success stories” of the Montreux Record mechanism and its associated Ramsar Advisory Missions.

GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFYING AND DESIGNATING KARST AND OTHER SUBTERRANEAN HYDROLOGICAL SYSTEMS AS WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:

This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.14) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and adopted with minor amendments on Monday, 17 May. SLOVENIA, with HUNGARY, added a request that the resolution be incorporated by the Bureau into the Strategic Framework and Guidelines for the application of Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance. The final resolution recalls the COP6 resolution that added subterranean karst and cave hydrological systems to the Ramsar wetland classification system and notes the IUCN Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection. The COP, *inter alia*: adopts the Guidelines; urges CPs to include karsts in their wetland inventories, policies and management planning; and calls on CPs to designate appropriate examples of karsts. The guidelines are annexed to the resolution.

INVASIVE SPECIES AND WETLANDS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.14) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Monday, 17 May. IUCN introduced an amendment that the STRP, rather than the Bureau, provide “guidance on legislation” rather than “model legislation” and best practice approaches that incorporate risk assessment, as each CP has its own particular national legal context. He also inserted text urging CPs to “review existing legal and institutional measures” pursuant to the resolution on CP legislative and policy reviews on wetlands, prior to urging CPs to adopt legislation and programmes to prevent the introduction of invasive and alien species. Delegates adopted the resolution as amended.

The final resolution recognizes the severe threat that alien plant and animal species pose to wetlands and wetland species, both terrestrial and marine, if they become invasive. The COP calls on CPs to, *inter alia*:

- where possible, address the environmental, economic and social impact of invasive species on wetlands within their jurisdictions;
- prepare an inventory of alien species in wetlands within their jurisdictions;
- identify those that pose a threat and may be controlled or eradicated;
- adopt legislation and programmes to prevent the introduction of new and environmentally dangerous alien species and the movement or trade thereof;
- develop capacity for identification of new and environmentally dangerous alien species; and
- facilitate awareness of and control of alien species.

It directs the Bureau to, *inter alia*, work with existing programmes to establish a data system that identifies invasive species and includes methods for and advice on their control and eradication, and prepare case studies where invasive species have adversely affected Ramsar sites. It directs the STRP to prepare wetland-specific guidelines for identifying, establishing priorities for action and managing alien species that potentially threaten wetlands.

INCENTIVE MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE THE APPLICATION OF THE WISE USE PRINCIPLES: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.15) was considered in Plenary on Friday, 14 May, and Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with amendments that incorporated recommendations from the 13th Global Biodiversity

Forum (GBF13), which was held just prior to the COP, added a decision that information on incentive measures be included in CPs’ national reports, and recognized that financial resources will be necessary for the STRP and Bureau to review existing guidelines and available information on incentive measures for an Internet-based resource kit cataloguing incentive measures, lessons learned and case studies.

The final resolution links the Convention’s objective of the wise use of wetlands with incentives measures, noting the latter’s inclusion in the CBD and Ramsar Joint Work Plan. The COP, *inter alia*:

- calls on CPs, NGOs, donor agencies and others to consider introducing incentive measures designed to encourage wise use and identify and remove perverse incentives;
- requests the STRP to cooperate with relevant bodies of the CBD, CMS, IUCN and others to review existing guidelines and information on incentive measures to prepare an Internet-based resource kit and explore the use of impact assessments as tools for identifying opportunities for implementing incentive measures; and
- directs the STRP and Bureau to prepare a report for COP8 on progress in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of incentive measures and the identification and removal of perverse incentives.

THE RAMSAR CONVENTION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT: STRATEGIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.16) was considered during the Technical Session on Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values on Saturday, 15 May, and in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with minor amendments. One amendment encouraged CPs to ensure that impact assessments relating to wetlands are undertaken in a transparent and participatory manner, including all stakeholders and as encouraged by the guidelines for establishing participatory processes to involve local communities and indigenous people. It states that the COP, *inter alia*:

- calls upon CPs to reinforce and strengthen their efforts to ensure that any programmes and policies with the potential to alter the ecological character of wetlands in the Ramsar List or negatively impact other wetlands are subject to rigorous impact assessment procedures;
- encourages CPs to ensure that impact assessment procedures seek to identify the true values of wetland ecosystems in terms of their many functions to allow these broader values to be included in decision making and management processes;
- requests the Bureau to continue work with the CMS, CBD, OECD, International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) and others to explore the use of impact assessments as tools for developing and implementing incentive measures; and
- requests the STRP to cooperate with the CBD and other relevant institutions to review existing guidelines and information on EIA and economic valuation of wetlands.

RESTORATION AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL PLANNING FOR WETLAND CONSERVATION AND WISE USE:

Delegates considered this resolution (COP7 DOC.15.17) in the Technical Session on National Planning for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use on Friday, 14 May, and in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted it with amendments by DENMARK to include a request that the Bureau and STRP identify wetland rehabilitation experts drawing upon established networks, call for a review of restoration approaches by CPs under the Ramsar-CBD Joint Work Plan, taking account of traditional norms and women’s roles, and attach an annex on elements to consider in restoration initiatives.



In the final resolution, the COP also calls on CPs to, *inter alia*: recognize that national wetland restoration programmes can provide significant benefits for people and wildlife; produce information about wetland losses, their restoration potential and the full benefits to restoration, and identify priority sites for restoration; and identify constraints and solutions to implementing ecologically, economically and socially sustainable restoration and develop demonstration projects and targeted technical exchange programmes.

A GLOBAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE WISE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF PEATLANDS: This recommendation (COP7 DOC.15.18) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and on Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with an additional clause recommended by GBF13 urging CPs, IPOs and other organizations to take immediate action to improve peatland awareness and protect sites under particular risk, especially tropical and boreal peatlands. In the final recommendation, the COP, *inter alia*: calls on CPs to prioritize support for inventory and evaluation of all peatland types and, where appropriate, nominate additional peatland ecosystems as Ramsar sites; endorses the Draft Global Action Plan for the Wise Use and Management of Peatlands and recommends cooperation in further refining the draft and establishing funding for appropriate projects in support of its Implementation Strategy; and invites the STRP and IPOs to assist CPs in evaluating the action plan. The draft global action plan is annexed to the resolution.

GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATING WETLAND CONSERVATION AND WISE USE INTO RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.19) was considered in the Technical Session on Ramsar and Water on Thursday, 13 May, and in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. The resolution underwent significant amendments based on proposals submitted by the Technical Session's regionally-based discussion groups and by amendments in Plenary by the US, to stipulate "as funds and human resources allow" for requests put to the Bureau and STRP, and recommendations from the February 1999 Pan-Asian Ramsar Meeting for targeted education of wetland stakeholders and mechanisms for resolving conflicts between riparian countries. TURKEY expressed reservations on international cooperation related to shared river basins and wetlands, particularly concerning proposals for Ramsar collaboration with the World Commission on Dams and consideration of the establishment of international river commissions.

The resolution, which delegates adopted as amended, states that the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the guidelines and urges CPs to prioritize their application, adapting them as necessary to suit national situations;
- directs the Bureau to make these and associated guidelines available to the secretariats, expert and technical bodies and other relevant regional institutions, river basin authorities and focal points of all other relevant environment conventions;
- further directs the Bureau and STRP, subject to budgetary resources, to follow and actively participate in the World Commission on Dams programme;
- invites those CPs that share river basins to pursue, as appropriate, application of these guidelines in a cooperative way with neighboring States in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention;
- commends the guidelines for consideration by all multilateral and bilateral donors to assist and guide their planning, project assessments and decision making in terms of integrated water resources management; and
- encourages CPs and other interested parties to develop pilot activities to promote and implement the guidelines in their countries. The guidelines are annexed to the resolution.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

UNDER THE CONVENTION: Delegates considered this resolution (COP7 DOC.15.20) in the Technical Session on Frameworks for Regional and International Cooperation Regarding Wetlands on Saturday, 15 May, and again in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. There was considerable debate in the final Plenary consideration of this resolution. TURKEY noted that amendments it had submitted to the drafting group had not been incorporated. He reiterated his proposals to delete text relating to transboundary watercourses and management of shared river basins, as they are irrelevant and controversial with respect to the context and obligations of the Ramsar Convention. He emphasized that the resolution would not constitute a legally binding instrument for Turkey and requested that these reservations be reflected in the COP7 report.

INDIA associated itself with the principles articulated by Turkey and stated that management of shared wetlands and river basins should be left to the CPs concerned. He emphasized that these are often sensitive issues and could get Ramsar into trouble if it attempts to address them, and suggested that if they must be tackled in a multinational forum, it should be the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. He proposed several amendments to the text, which were adopted by the Plenary: CPs be urged to "consider their implementation, adapting them as necessary to suit national situations," rather than "give priority to their implementation;" the guidelines be undertaken to raise the level and effectiveness of international development assistance programmes "in accordance with national plans and priorities;" all aspects of international trade in wetland-derived products be reviewed "taking into account discussions in more relevant fora;" and all references to the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses be deleted. SYRIA expressed its reservation to the latter amendment. The resolution was adopted with these and other minor amendments.

The final resolution states that the COP calls on CPs, in implementing the guidelines, to give special attention to:

- identifying shared wetlands, river basins and wetland-dependent species and supporting cooperation in their management;
- harmonizing Ramsar implementation with that of other appropriate regional and international conventions;
- intensifying efforts to share expertise and information and provide training in wetland conservation and wise use;
- undertaking actions to raise the level and effectiveness of international development assistance programmes directed at long-term conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;
- reviewing all aspects of international trade in wetland-derived products; and
- ensuring that foreign investment activities are subject to impact assessments.

It further encourages CPs to consider the guidelines as part of their policy and legal frameworks and to provide resources to expand the Bureau's internship programme. The Bureau is requested to gather and disseminate model codes of conduct for the business sector undertaking activities related to wetlands. The guidelines are annexed to the resolution.

PRIORITIES FOR WETLAND INVENTORY: Delegates considered this resolution (COP7 DOC.15.21) during the Technical Session on Tools for Assessing and Recognizing Wetland Values on Saturday, 15 May, and in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. They adopted the resolution with minor amendments. The final resolution recalls that CPs were called on to prepare inventories of their wetlands as an aid to formulating and implementing NWP and notes with concern that few countries have comprehensive national wetland inventories. The COP



urges CPs to, *inter alia*: complete national inventories and include information on wetland losses and those with potential for restoration; prioritize wetland types at greatest risk or with poorest information; consider adopting a suitable standardized protocol for data gathering and handling and the use of standardized low-cost and user-friendly GIS methods; and review or establish arrangements for maintaining wetlands inventory projects. It encourages CPs with shared wetlands or river basins to cooperate in gathering inventory and related management information and directs the SC to pay special attention to appropriate wetland inventory projects.

ENHANCING THE CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF INTERTIDAL WETLANDS: Delegates considered this resolution (COP7 DOC.15.22) in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Tuesday, 18 May. The UK added text to reflect the under-representation of bird populations dependent on intertidal wetlands and to identify Wetlands of International Importance, giving priority to areas important to indigenous and local populations. Noting that the resolution deals with salt-water intertidal wetlands, BELGIUM drew attention to freshwater intertidal wetlands, which constitute some of the most rare and threatened wetland types, and called on the COP to consider them at COP8.

The resolution was adopted as amended. It recognizes the critical economic, social and environmental values of intertidal wetlands and the dependence of substantial numbers of people on their productivity and values. It notes that large proportions of intertidal wetlands and their values have been lost and that global mechanisms to share and benefit from the experiences and expertise in addressing their conservation and wise use are inadequate. It states that the COP calls on CPs to: document the extent of loss of intertidal wetlands and inventory those remaining; review and modify existing policies that adversely affect such wetlands and introduce measures for their long-term conservation; identify and designate to the Ramsar List a greater number and area of intertidal wetlands; and suspend the promotion or creation of new facilities and expansion of unsustainable aquaculture activities that are harmful to coastal wetlands.

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE FOR MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.23) was considered in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted the resolution with minor amendments. The resolution expresses satisfaction with the work of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), approves the establishment of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWetCom), and encourages Mediterranean CPs to use and further develop MedWet instruments to encourage integrated and sustainable management of wetlands in the region. The COP invites CPs in other regions to consider using relevant MedWet tools and urges countries and organizations involved in MedWet to provide technical and financial assistance to other countries for this purpose. CPs and institutions, in particular the European Commission, are urged to continue providing financial support to the MedWet Initiative. It also endorses the initiative to establish a North African Wetland Centre.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, ISLAND WETLAND ECOSYSTEMS AND THE RAMSAR CONVENTION: Delegates considered this recommendation (COP7 DOC.15.24) in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May and Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates supported ARGENTINA's request to replace a proposal urging specific CPs "that have small island dependent territories and external territories" to review their implementation of the Convention with text urging CPs that have "small island wetland ecosystems" within their "territory." Delegates adopted the recommendation with this and other minor amendments. The final recommendation recognizes the close dependence of people in small island States on

wetlands, the vulnerable character of island ecosystems, and the resource constraints within which they operate to implement the Convention. It states that the COP urges CPs with small island wetland ecosystems to give special attention to ensuring Convention implementation in areas recognized for their fragility and special management needs. It requests the SC to investigate and develop MOCs and joint action programmes with organizations facilitating integrated environmental management in small island developing States (SIDS). It calls upon bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies to continue their support for wetland-related projects in SIDS.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: This recommendation (COP7 DOC.15.25) was considered on Tuesday, 18 May, and was adopted without amendment. The recommendation states that the COP: requests CPs to support the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy 1996-2000; urges Asian-Pacific CPs to nominate additional sites to the networks established under this strategy and participate in its action plans; and calls upon CPs to consider actively the development of a multilateral agreement or other arrangement to provide a long-term conservation framework for migratory waterbirds and their habitats that is inclusive of all Asia-Pacific countries.

ISSUES CONCERNING THE BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS OF RAMSAR SITES AND COMPENSATION OF WETLAND HABITATS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.26) was considered in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. The draft resolution sought to establish that there can be situations other than that of "urgent national interest" allowed in the Convention where Ramsar site boundaries may warrant further definition, for example where boundaries were erroneously defined at the time of listing. GREEN KOREA said setting new rules to allow changes to wetland sites' boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest could be open to misuse, and stressed that any resolutions should only permit site-specific changes. WWF expressed concern that the draft resolution contradicts the Convention. PERU and the AUSTRALIAN WETLAND ALLIANCE suggested postponing consideration of the matter to COP8. Amendments were inserted to take account of these concerns, including text recognizing that Australia will prepare two case studies for COP8 consideration, and requesting the SC to develop a procedure for reviewing this matter, also at COP8.

In the final resolution, the COP: requests that the SC develop for COP8 a procedure for reviewing Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than urgent national interest; urges CPs to integrate into land and water planning policies measures for compensating, as far as possible, any loss of wetland functions, attributes or values caused by human activities; and requests the SC to develop guidelines for compensation of wetland habitats in cases of unavoidable loss.

COMPENSATION FOR LOST WETLAND HABITATS AND OTHER FUNCTIONS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.28) was considered on Tuesday, 18 May, and was adopted with minor amendments, including CANADA's proposed three-step mitigation sequence of avoidance, minimization and compensation, and BRAZIL's request that the STRP define criteria and guidelines for compensation in the case of unavoidable wetland habitat losses. The final resolution states that the COP urges CPs to take all practicable measures for compensating any loss of wetland functions, attributes and values caused by human activities, integrate rules for compensation of wetland loss into national policies on land and water planning, and incorporate a preference for compensating with wetlands of similar type and in the same local water catchment.



MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN

WETLANDS: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.29) was considered on Tuesday, 18 May, and was adopted with minor amendments. It states that the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests CPs to intensify studies on the presence and significance of toxic substances in the water, sediments and biota of wetlands;
- authorizes the STRP, in collaboration with appropriate international bodies, to compile and disseminate reliable criteria and methods to evaluate wetlands' ecological quality through the establishment of indicative biological, physical and chemical parameters;
- invites CPs to promote the use of accurate and precise sampling and analysis methods by preparing, publishing and distributing recommendations in the form of clear and concise technical norms; and
- urges CPs to keep these methods under review and encourage necessary improvements.

CREATION OF A REGIONAL RAMSAR CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH ON WETLANDS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE:

This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.30) was considered in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. Delegates adopted the resolution, endorsing PANAMA's offer to host the centre, SPAIN's pledge to provide support to the centre, and ECUADOR's offer to provide technical assistance. The final resolution recalls that the Convention calls on CPs to promote training of wetland scientists and states that the COP, *inter alia*: approves of the Panamanian Government's offer to establish the centre; requests the Bureau to support Panama in studying technical and operational aspects for the centre's development and management; and encourages CPs to provide support to the centre and participate in its development.

WETLANDS FOR THE FUTURE INITIATIVE: This recommendation (COP7 DOC.15.32), considered in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May, was adopted with minor amendments. It outlines the goals of the US-funded Wetlands for the Future Initiative, and urges CPs and other organizations concerned about wetland conservation and sustainable use to initiate and support programmes similar to the initiative in other parts of the world, especially in Africa, and particularly in Franco-phone countries.

THE CONVENTION WORK PLAN 2000–2002: Delegates considered the Convention work plan (COP7 DOC.14, Annex 1) on Wednesday, 12 May, and the related draft resolution (COP7 DOC.15.33) on Monday, 17 May. The US amended the work plan objective to maximize the achievement of the Convention's goals to include text directing the SC to review the COP's structure and organization and adopt changes to facilitate its implementation and effectiveness. The resolution and annexed work plan were adopted as amended. The final resolution notes that for effective implementation of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in the next triennium, more precise targets for a range of appropriate actions are needed to encourage action in some areas. It states that the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the Convention work plan for the 2000–2002 triennium;
- invites the IPOs and other relevant institutions to provide policy, technical and financial assistance for effective implementation;
- endorses the global targets set for the Convention;
- urges all CPs to prepare national reports for COP8;
- encourages CPs to review internal processes and mechanisms for harmonizing regional and international conventions and agreements; and
- instructs the SC to prepare for COP8 consideration a revised Strategic Plan of the Convention for 2003–2008.

The Convention's Work Plan 2000–2002, which sets priorities and targets to be achieved by COP8, to fulfill the operational objectives of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002, is annexed to the resolution.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS: Budgetary matters were considered together with the work plan in Plenary on Wednesday, 12 May, and in a contact group on Thursday, 13 May. The related draft resolution (COP7 DOC.15.34) was discussed in Plenary and in the contact group on Monday, 17 May, and adopted the next day. Delegates agreed to set a minimum contribution level of Swiss Francs (SFr) 1000 and debated at length on two proposals, one by the SC to increase the Ramsar budget by 5%, 2% and 2% (5-2-2 proposal) over the next three years, and another by the contact group to increase the budget by 5% for each of the next three years (5-5-5 proposal). Secretary-General Blasco stated that if the 5-5-5 proposal were adopted, the additional funds would go to recruiting a development assistance officer dedicated to active fundraising for Convention implementation.

Several CPs, including the UK, SPAIN, KENYA, BELGIUM, GREECE, SWITZERLAND, EGYPT, SLOVENIA, DENMARK, CANADA, the PHILIPPINES, AUSTRALIA and SWEDEN, supported the 5-5-5 proposal, emphasizing that this was essential for the implementation of the work plan. GERMANY, with the NETHERLANDS, URUGUAY, SYRIA and the US, preferred the 5-2-2 proposal and observed that while a development officer would be advantageous, other ways to raise the necessary funds exist, such as through the payment of dues owed by CPs.

The contact group considered the two proposed options. IRELAND reported to the Plenary that a compromise had been reached that applies the increases of 5%, 2% and 2% over the three years to countries' contributions rather than the total size of the budget itself. This, he said, would result in a slightly larger budget that would allow the Bureau to dedicate the additional funds together with unpaid dues to engaging a development assistance officer. The draft resolution was amended based on this compromise and was considered in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. The Secretary-General noted that since the UN scale of assessment for 2001 and 2002 were not yet available, the annual contributions for those years were not indicated. MAURITANIA suggested that excess funds that were to go into the SGF be earmarked for the establishment of the development assistance post to ensure its security. Delegates adopted the text as amended, in which the COP:

- approves the budget for the 2000–2002 triennium, which represents an increase of 5% from the COP6-approved 1999 budget for 2000, and a 2% increase in 2001 and 2002;
- decides that each CP's contribution will be in accordance with the scale of assessment for member States' contribution to the UN budget;
- sets a minimum contribution of SFr 1000; and
- urges the Bureau to endeavor to secure the additional resources needed to establish the post of Development Assistance Officer within the Secretariat.

It also adopts Mauritania's proposal to earmark the SFr 50,000 set aside for the SGF to establish the development assistance post. The budget is annexed to the resolution.

THANKS TO THE HOST COUNTRY: Delegates adopted by acclamation a resolution thanking the Government of Costa Rica for hosting COP7 (COP7 DOC.15.35).

STATUS OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE RAMSAR CONVENTION: This resolution (COP7 DOC.15.36) was introduced to COP7 on Monday, 17 May, following contact group consultations, and considered in Plenary on Tuesday, 18 May. Noting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's absence from COP7, the RUSSIAN FEDER-



ATION, INDIA and CHINA stated that the resolution was politically motivated, and with ARMENIA, ZAMBIA and ALGERIA, said they did not wish to participate in a decision on this issue, and would abstain if the matter were put to a vote. President Benito noted these abstentions, and delegates adopted the resolution, which notes that the "Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," has ceased to exist and has been replaced by five successor States. It acknowledges that three of the successor States are CPs to the Convention, and calls on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to submit to the Convention Depository a notification of succession to the Ramsar Convention as the other successor States have done.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP7

From the point of view of many participants, COP7 constituted a significant step in Ramsar's development and demonstrated that efforts to broaden its scope, beyond the once somewhat narrow focus on protecting wetlands as habitat for waterfowl and into the wider context of sustainable development concerns, are beginning to bear fruit.

With the clear display of resolve at COP7 to continue expanding Ramsar's *raison d'être* to integrate all wetland resources and functions into biodiversity, land use and shared water management, and to equip the Convention with the tools to do so, it now has the potential to raise the political profile of wetland issues, effectively earning them a place on the international sustainable development stage. Support for this aim at COP7 was almost universal, and by adopting a cornucopia of resolutions and recommendations, delegates departed San José armed with many of the instruments that they need to successfully play their part.

While some thought that the overriding COP7 theme of "People and Wetlands: The Vital Link" was somewhat lost in the plethora of resolutions and political tugs-of-war, COP7 did make good progress on various new guidelines, particularly those on participatory processes to involve local communities and indigenous people in the management of wetlands. In particular, delegates seemed pleased with resolutions on the Strategic Framework and targets to establish a network of 2000 Wetlands of International Importance by COP9 and to ensure that 75% of Ramsar sites have management plans in place or in preparation, and a comprehensive outreach programme to educate decision makers and the public about wetlands.

AN INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS: This expansion of repertoire carries potential risks as well as benefits. For Ramsar, the move to broaden the Convention's scope has ushered in the intrusion of political realities into what had previously been a placid environmental process. This, along with the recent accession of numerous new CPs, has meant a loss of innocence for the scientific community associated with Ramsar, which has been largely sheltered from the political ravages that have dogged other, more broad-based, environmental conventions.

However, many participants agreed that, given the Convention's relative naiveté, the Secretariat handled many of these new issues with aplomb, successfully sidestepping several political quagmires, including the debates over Israel's categorization in the Asian region, behind-the-scenes discussions on the status of successor States to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and fervent reservations by Turkey aimed at omitting references to cooperation on transboundary watercourses. Israel's status seemed to cause the most consternation, with some participants expressing concern that coming to a vote in the debate on this issue put Ramsar's friendly tradition of agreement by consensus on the rocks. While these political controversies squandered some of the COP's time, they did not divert all attention from the

substantive issues to be addressed. In fact, many delegates saw this intrusion of politics instead as a sign that the political profile of Ramsar is indeed being raised, and quite quickly. Under the circumstances, participants were relieved that such issues did not derail the entire meeting. One highly-charged political issue that COP7 did not manage to overcome completely was Turkey and India's insistence that issues relating to international watercourses and shared river basins were beyond the scope of Ramsar. Many delegates agree that this will certainly be an issue to track as the Convention expands into the all-important yet contentious arena of the global water crisis.

MONEY MATTERS: In spite of successfully clearing these political hurdles, most participants agreed that the meeting's success was far from absolute. Some felt that COP7 had equipped the Convention with the necessary framework to realize its broadening objectives, only to have expectations dampened by delegates' unwillingness to increase the funding for the Bureau to function effectively. Many at COP7 were disheartened by the failure to secure a larger core budget for the Bureau. Because of the CPs' lack of enthusiasm to shell out much in the way of additional funds, there is concern that the Bureau will be hard-pressed to meet the expectations of CPs and realize the potential that COP7 has created. However, others argued that a distinction should be made between implementing the Convention in CPs and allocating funds for the Bureau and its expected role. Despite the seemingly bleak scenario, voluntary contributions through other channels, such as the GEF, the IPOs and other NGOs, hold promise and may well be vital to the effectiveness of Ramsar.

WHAT NEXT?: With the worsening global water crisis, it is anticipated that wetlands and their crucial role in the water cycle will take center stage in global politics. Future COPs can therefore expect a more politicized discourse. To this end, the Ramsar Convention will have to gear itself up for these changes. It has already made a good start in this direction, with the strong display of resolve to cooperate and forge links with other environmental conventions, particularly the CBD, WHC, CMS, CITES, CCD and FCCC, which will serve to raise the political profile of Ramsar as well as the other lesser-known pre-Rio conventions. The Convention will undoubtedly experience more growing pains as it faces up to the challenges associated with its newly acquired role on the international sustainable development stage.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE COP8

UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE

CHANGE: The Subsidiary Bodies of the FCCC will meet from 31 May-11 June 1999 in Bonn, Germany. COP-5 will be held in Bonn from 25 October-5 November 1999. For information, contact: the FCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.de; Internet: <http://www.unfccc.de/>.

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM: GBF14 will be held in Montreal, Canada, from 18-20 June 1999. For information, contact: Laurence Christen, IUCN; fax: +41-22-999-0025; e-mail: lac@hq.iucn.org; Internet: www.iucn.org/themes/gbf/14/english/index.html.

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: The fourth meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-4) will be held from 21-25 June 1999 in Montreal. An Intersessional Meeting on the Operations of the Convention will be held from 28-30 June. The *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Article 8(j) will meet from 24-28 January 2000. SBSTTA-5 will be held in Montreal from 31 January-4 February 2000. COP-5 will convene in Nairobi, Kenya, from 15-26 May 2000. For information, contact: the CBD Secretariat, World Trade Center, 393 St. Jacques



Street, Suite 300, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: chm@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>.

COASTAL ZONE 99: Coastal Zone 99 - The People, the Coast, the Ocean: Vision 2020 - will be held in San Diego, California, from 24-30 July 1999. For information, contact: Urban Harbors Institute, University of Massachusetts at Boston; tel: +1-617-287-5570; fax +1-617-287-5575; e-mail: CZ99@umb.edu.

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES STANDING COMMITTEE: The 42nd Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee will take place in South Africa in September 1999. For more information, contact the CITES Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8139; fax: +41-22-797-3417; e-mail: cites@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.cites.org>.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONFERENCE: Birdlife International will host its World Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 13-17 October 1999. For information, contact: Birdlife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, CB3 0NA, UK; fax: +44-1223-277-200; Internet: <http://www.wing-wbsj.or.jp/birdlife/conference>.

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION: The General Assembly of States Parties to the WHC will take place from 28-29 October 1999 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. For information, contact: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352, Paris 07 SP, France; tel: +33-1-45-681-889; fax: +33-1-45-685-570; e-mail: wh-info@unesco.org; Internet: www.unesco.org/whc.

CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES: CMS-6 is scheduled to meet in Cape Town, South Africa, from 10-16 November 1999. For information, contact: the CMS Secretariat, UN Premises in Bonn, Martin-Luther-King-Str. 8, Bonn, D-53175, Germany; tel: +49-228-815-2401; fax: +49-228-815-2449; e-mail: cms@unep.de; Internet: www.wcmc.org.uk/cms.

CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: COP-3 of the CCD is scheduled to meet in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999. For information, contact: the CCD Secretariat, P.O.

Box 260129, D-53153 Bonn, Germany; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2899; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.de; Internet: <http://www.unccd.de>.

SECOND WATER FORUM AND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: The World Water Council's Second World Water Forum, hosted by the Netherlands, will meet from 16-22 March 2000 in The Hague. For information, contact: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.O. Box 20061, 2500 EB The Hague, the Netherlands; tel: +31-70-348-5402; fax: +31-70-348-6792; e-mail: hans.van.zijst@dml.minbuza.nl.

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The 8th Session of the CSD is expected to meet in Spring 2000 to consider integrated planning and management of land resources, agriculture, and financial resources/trade and investment/economic growth. For information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org. For major group information, contact Zehra Aydin-Sipos, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-8811; fax: +1-212-963-1267; e-mail: aydin@un.org. Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/>.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ECOLOGY (INTECOL): The 6th Wetlands Symposium of INTECOL will be held in Quebec City, Canada, from 6-12 August 2000. Its focus will be on Wetlands at the Millennium. The meeting will coincide with other related events, also in Quebec City, including the International Peat Society's 11th Global Congress and the Society of Wetlands Scientists 21st Annual Conference. For information, contact: Millennium Wetland Event Secretariat, Elizabeth MacKay, Bureau 620, 2875 Blvd Laurier Ste-Foy, Quebec G1V 2M2, Canada; tel: +1-418-657-3853; fax: +1-418-657-7934; e-mail: cqvb@cqvb.qc.ca; Internet: <http://www.cqvb.qc.ca/wetland2000/>.

RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS: COP8 is scheduled to convene in Spain in 2002. For information, contact: the Ramsar Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196, Gland, Switzerland; tel: +41-22-999-0170; fax: +41-22-999-0169; e-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org; Internet: <http://www.ramsar.org>.

CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

Albania	Côte d'Ivoire	India	Morocco	Sri Lanka
Algeria	Croatia	Indonesia	Namibia	Suriname
Argentina	Cuba	Iran	Nepal	Sweden
Armenia	Czech Republic	Ireland	Netherlands	Switzerland
Australia	Dem. Rep. of Congo	Israel	New Zealand	Syria
Austria	Denmark	Italy	Nicaragua	Thailand
Bahamas	Ecuador	Jamaica	Niger	The Former Yugoslav
Bahrain	Egypt	Japan	Norway	Republic of Macedonia
Bangladesh	El Salvador	Jordan	Pakistan	Togo
Belgium	Estonia	Kenya	Panama	Trinidad & Tobago
Belize	Finland	Latvia	Papua New Guinea	Tunisia
Bolivia	France	Lebanon	Paraguay	Turkey
Botswana	Gabon	Liechtenstein	Peru	Uganda
Brazil	Gambia	Lithuania	Philippines	Ukraine
Bulgaria	Georgia	Luxembourg	Poland	United Kingdom
Burkina Faso	Germany	Madagascar	Portugal	United States
Canada	Ghana	Malawi	Republic of Korea	Uruguay
Chad	Greece	Malaysia	Romania	Venezuela
Chile	Guatemala	Mali	Russian Federation	Viet Nam
China	Guinea	Malta	Senegal	Yugoslavia
Colombia	Guinea-Bissau	Mauritania	Slovak Republic	Zambia
Comoros	Honduras	Mexico	Slovenia	former USSR
Congo	Hungary	Monaco	South Africa	
Costa Rica	Iceland	Mongolia	Spain	