

Report of the Third Oceania Regional Meeting for CoP9 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Held in Nadi, Fiji, 29-30 September 2005.

A preparatory meeting for the 9th Meeting of the Conference of The Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, Kampala, Uganda, November 2005

1. Introduction

The Third Oceania Regional Meeting was held at the Fiji Mocambo Hotel in Nadi, Fiji, from 29 - 30 September. The Regional meeting was hosted by Fiji, represented by Manasa Sovaki, from the Department of Environment. The Agenda for the meeting is given in Annex 1, the List of Participants in Annex 2 and List of Documents in Annex 3.

1.2 Representation

Contracting parties represented included Australia, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Samoa. Ramsar's International Organization Partners were represented included Birdlife International, Wetlands International Oceania, WWF Living Waters Programme and WWF South Pacific Programme. An observer from the University of the South Pacific (USP) also attended and the secretarial support was provided by SPREP, including the secretariats out-posted Oceania officer Vainuupo Jungblut. Funding was made available by the governments of Australia and Sweden to help organize the meeting. SPREP also provided financial support towards the meeting.

1.3 Background

The meeting built upon advancements that have been made in the region on wetlands wise use and conservation since the last regional meeting and CoP8 in 2002. Such advancements include the recruitment of a regional support officer for the Ramsar Convention based at SPREP; The accession to the convention of Palau, Marshall Islands and Samoa since the last CoP; progress made by other Pacific Island Countries towards accession to the Convention, notably Fiji, Cook Islands and Tonga; Furthermore, the meeting was regarded as a particularly important one since it was the last regional meeting before the CoP.

This report reflects key outcomes of the meeting and is provided for the information of interested organizations and stakeholders including the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (CoP).

1.4 Meeting Objectives

The objectives of the Third Oceania Regional Meeting were:

- To enable the Ramsar Convention Parties in the Pacific Islands (Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Palau, Marshall Islands) to raise issues, priorities and challenges currently faced in conserving their wetlands.
- To discuss options for supporting Ramsar implementation in the Oceania region with specific focus on the nature, roles, responsibilities and funding for a regional support

officer.

- To consider and finalize a draft resolution to Ramsar CoP9 canvassing Oceania regional wetlands issues.
- To assist parties in preparing country specific positions and, where appropriate, identifying regional positions to be raised at Ramsar CoP9.
- To identify new Oceania representatives to the Ramsar STRP and Standing Committee.

1.3 Meeting Outcomes

All five objectives of the meeting were met as participants agreed to a revised regional support initiative for Oceania, two new draft resolutions sponsored by Samoa, DR21 and DR22, and revisions to other draft resolutions of interest to the Oceania region. The meeting also agreed to several tasks that SPREP would undertake in the lead up to the CoP to assist Oceania Contracting Parties with their preparations.

2. MEETING RECORD

DAY 1 Thursday 29 September 2005

2.1 Session One – Official Opening

The Third Oceania Regional Meeting for CoP9 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was officially opened with a prayer by Mr. Faumuina Pati Liu of Samoa and welcome remarks by the Ramsar Secretariat and SPREP.

2.1.1. Ramsar Secretariat

The Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Mr. Peter Bridgewater, welcomed the participants to the meeting on behalf of the Ramsar Secretariat and re-emphasized the importance of the meeting as the last regional meeting before the CoP in November. He thanked the government of Fiji for hosting the meeting and for the warm welcome received. He further thanked SPREP for the excellent organization of the meeting.

2.1.2 SPREP

Ms Dominique Benzaken welcomed delegates from the region and beyond. She expressed her thanks to the Government of Fiji for hosting the meeting and to the Government of Australia for kindly funding the meeting.

2.1.3 Election of Chair

Nominations for chair of the meeting were sought from the floor. In response, the delegate from Fiji nominated Samoa to chair the meeting. Samoa was accepted and confirmed as the chair of the meeting and thanked Fiji for the nomination. The Chair asked the participants whether the agenda should be adopted and asked for clarification on this. However, it was noted that the agenda was flexible and could be amended to incorporate other issues as needed.

2.1.4 Introductions of participants

The Chair asked participants to introduce themselves to the rest of the meeting and give their expectations. Accordingly, the participants went around the table for their introductions. The Chair in his introduction urged Fiji to follow through with their accession process.

2.2 Session Two - Overview of meeting objectives and statements

2.2.1 Objectives of the Third Oceania Regional Meeting

The Chair introduced the meeting objectives and welcomed comments and additional suggestions on these. No comments were put forth from the group

2.2.2 Introductory statements:

Ramsar Secretariat

Mr. Peter Bridgewater of the Ramsar Secretariat stated that the meeting will be discussing issues in the CoP9 agenda, and saw this as a good exercise for first timers to the CoP to familiarize with these issues. He emphasized the importance of the role of the Ramsar Convention's IOPs¹ assisting countries to implement the Ramsar Convention and expressed to the meeting his pleasure in being able to attend as Oceania is his region also. He encouraged countries to update their Ramsar Site information, as this would greatly assist the Secretariat with its work.

He recognized that assistance from the Convention's Small Grants Fund have been successfully accessed by Palau, Fiji and Samoa over the last three years and applauded their efforts in successfully utilizing these funds

The Chair mentioned that Samoa are looking at their second sight designation before the end of the year but would require baseline information to move this forward.

SPREP

Ms. Dominique Benzaken made her introductory statements on behalf of SPREP. She mentioned that SPREP has ongoing activities in the region to support Pacific Island Countries and Territories with their wetlands work. She further mentioned that the meeting is an opportunity for countries to deliberate on common issues to take to the CoP.

Contracting Parties

The Contracting Parties in Oceania were given the floor for their introductory statements

The Australia delegation, Mr. Bruce Gray and Mr. Tony Slatyer, thanked the Chair for giving them the floor and thanked the Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention for attending. They further thanked SPREP for arranging the meeting and the Government of Fiji for hosting. (Official Statement given in Annex 9).

The Marshall Islands delegate, Mr. John Bungitak, thanked the donors for the invitation, thanked SPREP for their assistance. Mr. Bungitak lastly acknowledged the assistance of Bill Phillips towards the designation of RMIs first Ramsar Site.

The delegate from Palau, Ms. Tarita Holm, expressed her thanks to the Australian Government for funding the meeting. She further stated that she was looking forward to working with other participants to learn more about the processes of the Ramsar Convention.

The New Zealand delegation, Mr. Phillipe Gerbaux and Ms. Paula Warren, reminded participants that they are here to discuss wetlands and to be conscious of the fact that carrying out this work at the national level is not always easy.

The delegate from Samoa, Mr. Faumuina Pati Liu, thanked the Ramsar Secretariat for their assistance with Samoa's accession to the Convention. He acknowledged the assistance of Bill

¹ International Organization Partners

Phillips towards Samoa's approved proposal under the Ramsar Small Grants Fund and thanked New Zealand and Australia for supporting Samoa. Lastly, he thanked the Parties for their regional contribution.

Non-party statements

Introductory statements were made the delegate from Fiji and the representative of the University of the South Pacific, based in Suva, Fiji.

The delegate from Fiji, Mr. Manasa Sovaki, thanked the chair for the opportunity given and mentioned that the International NGOs based in Fiji have assisted greatly with national wetland surveys and in raising the need to protect these areas with decision makers. He further mentioned that wetlands are important in Fiji as a means of alleviating poverty and for the protection of culture.

The representative from the University of the South Pacific, Mr. Marika Tuiwawa, thanked SPREP for the invitation. He mentioned that USP does not do Ramsar work per se, but their work is indirectly contributing to the aims and objectives of the Convention. Lastly, he emphasized that technical and funding support from New Zealand and Australia is needed in order to further the work of the convention in the region.

Ramsar IOPs

The representatives of the three Ramsar partner organizations Wetlands International, WWF Living Waters Programme, WWF South Pacific Programme and Birdlife International made statements.

The representative of Wetlands International Oceania, Mr. Doug Watkins, mentioned the value and importance of cooperative projects between the IOPs. He cited projects in Fiji as a good example of collaboration where two or three IOPs are actively involved.

The representative of WWF Living Waters Programme, Mr. Bill Phillips, elaborated on the accession process for Fiji stating that a team effort at the national level will see Fiji well placed to implement the Ramsar Convention. He further highlighted the pivotal role of the British High Commission in Fiji with actively supporting Fiji's move towards accession to the Convention.

The representative from WWF South Pacific Programme, Ms. Kesaia Tabunakawai, highlighted the work that they are engaged in dealing with freshwater resources. She mentioned that they are working with communities in PNG, Fiji, the Cook Islands and Solomon Islands to assist them to better conserve their resources. She further mentioned that their most successful work so far has been in engaging communities that own Lake Kutubu in PNG.

2.3 Session Three - Regional policy context & reporting

2.3.1 Regional Policy Frameworks

A presentation on regional policy frameworks was done Dominique Benzaken for the information of participants. Such frameworks include:

- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
- SPREP Action Plan
- Pacific Plan for increased cooperation and integration
- National Sustainable Development Strategies (an outcome of the Mauritius International Meeting for SIDS)

- Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy
- Regional Wetland Action Plan for the Pacific Islands
- International Waters Project

Issues arising:

The Australian Delegation raised that the Pacific Plan is an important step for the region in terms of cooperation, and should not be seen as separate from the work that SPREP is doing. He further mentioned that the integration of initiatives is important and encouraged SPREP to work closely with SOPAC on water resources, citing work already carried out by SOPAC on this.

The New Zealand delegation pointed out that alien species were not mentioned in the presentation by SPREP.

SPREP expressed their agreement with Australia on promoting the environment within the Pacific Plan. In response to the comments from New Zealand, they mentioned that much work has already been carried out in the region on alien species, supported by SPREP.

2.3.2 Outcomes of the Second Regional Meeting (2002)

Vainuupo Jungblut of SPREP gave a brief presentation on the outcomes of the second Regional Meeting for Ramsar CoP8 held in Apia Samoa, 6-8 May 2002. The main outcomes of this meeting were:

- The identification of key challenges for the sustainability of wetland resources of the Oceania region.
- Signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between SPREP and the Ramsar Secretariat
- Development of a Joint Work Plan to give early practical effect to the MoC
- Input into the Convention's Strategic Plan for the period 2003-2008
- Oceania Resolution to Ramsar CoP8

Issues arising:

Bill Phillips of WWF Living Waters Programme sought clarification from the Ramsar Secretary-General on the status of the Joint Work Plan (JWP) as the basis of the work of the Assistant Ramsar Officer in the region and whether it will be revisited.

Peter Bridgewater replied stating that implementation of the JWP has been disappointing due to over ambitious actions and a lack of resources. He suggested to the meeting that a plenary or group discussion to review or brainstorm key issues to be incorporated into the JWP. He further explained that the Convention's MoU agreements with other organizations suffer from the same problem due to level of resources available.

Paula Warren of New Zealand commented that there needs to be support for work programmes that can be easily implemented, and in doing so, cited the success of the Pacific Global Taxonomic Initiative (GTI). She called upon participants to think broadly on how to secure funding for real projects and getting started on implementing a few activities rather than having a long wishlist that may never eventuate.

2.3.3 Outcomes of the 31st Standing Committee Meeting

Mr. Bruce Gray of the Australian delegation gave a brief report on outcomes of the 31st meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee (6-10 June). The meeting took note that the decisions and recommendations of this meeting are posted on the Ramsar Convention website.

One main outcome of the standing committee meeting was the approved Oceania regional

initiative proposal. The initiative is a vehicle to build capacity to implement the Ramsar Convention and wetlands management in general. The meeting recognized that the Oceania Regional Initiative proposal in its current form would require revision before tabling again at the CoP in November. The revised regional initiative is discussed in detail under session five below.

Issues arising

Palau sought clarification on the Oceania initiative to which Australia replied stating that the initiative focuses on securing resources to build capacity for implementing the Convention in the Oceania region and for wetlands management and conservation in general.

Peter Bridgewater explained that the Standing Committee is the management body of the Convention in between CoPs.

Bill Phillips inquired as to why the regional initiative has not secured funding. Peter Bridgewater explained that Oceania initiative proposal was not well prepared in comparison with other initiative proposals that the Secretariat has received. He further mentioned that the proposal needs to be revised before CoP9 and should not expect to start from year one. Lastly, he explained that there is funding to start up a regional position, but the position needs to be disassociated from the regional initiative.

2.3.4 Update on CoP9 Policy Issues of regional interest

Mr. Peter Bridgewater provided an update on the preparations for CoP9 and meetings on road to Kampala, notably:

- IWRM meeting - 2004
- UN International water decade 2005-2010
- Ramsar CoP9
- 4th World Water forum - Mexico 2006
- Medwet Com6
- STRP-12 Feb 05
- Standing Committee CoP Sub-group
- Standing Committee 31
- Regional Meeting – Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania

He further reminded participants of the urgency in registering online for CoP9 and further urged them to bring their documentation with them to the CoP.

2.4 Session Four - CoP9 Agenda and issues Arising

2.4.1 CoP8 Resolution on Oceania

Peter Bridgewater gave a presentation on the last meeting of the CoP and drew the meetings attention to the issues contained in the Oceania CoP8 resolution. He further thanked those governments that made the regional support officer position possible.

Issues arising:

Palau inquired whether other Ramsar regions already have coordinators, Peter Bridgewater replied by stating that there is a senior regional advisor for Asia based at the Ramsar Secretariat and financed by the Ramsar core budget. He further mentioned that there was no point in having an Oceania post at the Secretariat, needs to be based in the region.

Australia pointed out that a place marker resolution was lodged with the Ramsar Secretariat, developed by Australia in collaboration with PNG, New Zealand and SPREP on behalf of the

Oceania parties. He further mentioned that input from the parties was sought on this place marker resolution.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that there is a need to develop a resolution to reflect current issues and challenges in the region.

2.4.2 Presentation of CoP9 agenda & Key Issues

The Secretary-General gave a presentation on the CoP9 agenda, draft resolutions and issues arising. The draft resolutions discussed at length were DR1, DR4, DR5, DR8, DR9 DR13 and DR19. Perhaps the most contentious were two new DRs sponsored by Samoa, DR21 and DR22.

DR1 - Additional Scientific and Technical Guidance for implementing the wise use concept

In discussing DR1, the meeting noted the revised definitions for concepts associated with the Convention. Some concerns were raised over the new definitions. and the meeting agreed that Parties would need to deliberate further on this issue of revised definitions.

The meeting took note of controversial issues, such as those under DR1, to take to the CoP and the importance of parties being fully briefed on such issues.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that it is important for parties to understand the key concepts associated with the convention and the full implications of these concepts on national work to implement the convention.
- The meeting requested SPREP to compile a brief on key CoP9 draft resolutions for signatory countries.

DR4 - Conservation and sustainable use of fish resources

This draft resolution was introduced and comments welcomed from the floor. An issue that arose in the deliberations was whether governance and sustainability issues were considered in developing this DR.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that the DR is a contentious one as it contains some issues on the controlling of aquaculture and fisheries.

DR5 - Synergies with other Multilateral Environment Agreements

In deliberations on DR5, the Chair was requested by the meeting to look at ways in which to minimize reporting as required by the Ramsar Strategic plan. The Chair suggested that parties need to discuss these reporting requirements with their decision makers.

The meeting welcomed a remark from the Ramsar Secretariat that they are looking at an easier national reporting format for Parties.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed to call upon the Ramsar Secretariat to be clear on the specific use of national reports prior to urging countries to complete them.

DR8 – Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Secretariat introduced DR8. Deliberations on this DR, in light of the proposed regional initiative for Oceania, were carried out in session five below. (DR8 rev.1 is given in Annex 5)

DR9 – Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The Ramsar Secretariat introduced DR9. The meeting took note of efforts by the Secretariat to trial a new method of promoting, monitoring and measuring 2006-2008 implementation of the convention. No comments were raised from the floor.

Another issue raised by the Ramsar Secretariat, and related to DR13 below, of increasing concern to the convention was lack of annual contributions made by Parties.

DR13 – Financial and Budgetary Matters

In discussing DR13, the meeting welcomed a statement from the Ramsar Secretariat on continuing funding support for the Regional Officer position currently at SPREP, and that continuing this position will rely primarily on the revised DR8 and vocal support from Oceania Parties at CoP9. It was mentioned also that the Convention's budget would be increased by four percent

Agreement:

- The meeting urged parties to please follow up and pay their annual contributions (if not already done so), as these payments are extremely important to the functioning of the Ramsar Secretariat.

DR19 – Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention

Peter Bridgewater introduced DR19 and drew the meetings attention to the importance of the role of CEPA and need to promote it within the work of the convention. The meeting noted that CEPA activities are not funded through the Convention's core budget, but through support from private enterprise.

The meeting further noted that CEPA nominations would not be done at the upcoming CoP.

DR 21 – Integrated, Cross-Biome Planning and Management of Wetlands, especially in Small Island Developing States

Bill Phillips representing WWF Living Waters Programme introduced the new DR21 for the information of the meeting. In his introduction, he gave a brief overview of why this issue is important to the region. He pointed out that WWF has already done some work on the issue and mentioned that this DR may be useful to STRP work on applying an integrated approach to wetlands management within parties. Lastly, he thanked Samoa for their willingness to support and submit DR21. (DR21 is given in Annex 6)

Issues arising:

Australia mentioned that DR looked sensible but raised one consideration for Samoa as the sponsoring country to consider – That of making reference to the UNEP-GPA in paragraph 11 so as to reflect global initiatives already underway.

SPREP raised that there will be a UNEP Post within SPREP to work on GPA programme, and called upon the use of this position so as not to duplicate efforts.

USP pointed out that there are similar programmes being implemented by the PABITRA² initiative across the Asia-Pacific and to include reference to this initiative in paragraph 11.

Peter Bridgewater outlined that the progress of this DR relies on what happens within the CBD and suggested that it should be considered by the CBD first. He further pointed out that the DR should be thought of in terms of integrating convention processes with that of the CBD.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed to add text in paragraph 12 from the DR and table for discussion together with DR13 on Budget matters, delete paragraph 13 and incorporate added text in paragraph 11 as proposed
- The meeting agreed to forward the new draft resolution sponsored by Samoa for consideration by the CoP.

DR22 – Recognizing Wetlands of International Importance for their Traditional Cultural Values

Bill Phillips introduced DR22 and explained that the DR responds to cultural values for wetlands and excluded socio-economic issues to be dealt with at a later date. He mentioned that he hopes the parties would collectively support Samoa on this DR. (DR22 is given in Annex 7).

Issues arising:

New Zealand called upon the Ramsar Secretariat to clarify some of the points concerning this DR before moving forward with discussions. Peter Bridgewater in reply mentioned that Culture is an extremely delicate issue in the Convention and strongly pointed out that this DR would not do it. He suggested that the issue could be discussed at the Technical Sessions at CoP9, one of which will be dealing with culture.

He also suggested that this is not the time to table such a resolution, as it will meet with criticism at the upcoming CoP. He mentioned that although the DR is appropriate, it could set back progress at the CoP. As a way forward, he suggested that the schema in the annex of the DR be tabled at the technical session on culture. He advised the meeting not to put forward the DR but to present the schema at the technical session.

Peter Bridgewater pointed out that if the meeting agrees to support Samoa along the lines of his advice concerning the technical session, then he and the Samoa delegates would discuss arrangements for factoring in a presentation from Samoa into the technical session on culture.

Australia pointed out that they are happy to discuss the issue of culture and would support refinements to the DR. They further raised that the 27 guiding principles contained in the annex to the DR need to be carefully worked through as principle 26 is a controversial issue under the CBD.

Bill Phillips expressed his disagreement with the statement that not much work has been done at CoP8. He mentioned that now is the opportunity to push the cultural issue through to the CoP and called upon parties at the meeting to support Samoa in pushing the DR through to the CoP.

Peter Bridgewater reinforced his opinion that the DR is not the way forward. He stated that there is no reason to rush this issue as it could divert attention away from the real issues important to Oceania. The Cultural issue needs to be addressed through a proper way.

² Pacific Asia Biodiversity Transect

The Marshall Islands inquired as to why it is difficult for other countries to accept culture. They further went on to express his endorsement for the DR. Palau also expressed their support and endorsement of the DR.

New Zealand stated that the consideration of the DR should not be rushed but should be considered over the duration of the meeting. They further pointed out that culture is a UNESCO and World Heritage Convention issue.

Australia expressed their support for some language to move the DR forward as it looked attractive it start off with. They also drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that DR22 is a competing model to DR1 and that the meeting would need to revisit DR1 for better understanding.

Agreement:

- After much discussion and some debate, the meeting agreed to forward the draft resolution (DR22) with amendments for consideration by the CoP.

Note: the last two items under session 4 were merged with the discussions of the CoP9 agenda.

DAY 2 Friday 30 September 2005

2.5 Session Five - Oceania resolution

2.5.1 Outcomes of the Regional Wetlands Capacity Building Workshop

The delegate from Palau, Ms Tarita Holm, presented on the outcomes from the Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Wetlands Wise Use held 26-28 September 2005 also in Nadi. These outcomes aided in the elaboration of a revised regional support initiative for Oceania. (The outcomes are in Annex 4)

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that these priorities need to be taken up with national decision makers in order for them to be integrated into national development planning processes.

2.5.2 Overview of Regional Support Initiative for Oceania

Dominique Benzaken introduced to the meeting the aims, objectives and actions of the proposed Regional Support Initiative for Oceania. A question that arose was whether the CoP8 resolution would be used as a basis for a current resolution to CoP9? Or as a basis for a regional initiative? (The revised Regional Initiative is given in Annex 8).

The meeting noted that the context rather than the content of a regional initiative is important and took note that a regional support officer for the whole region is needed, not just for the PIC signatories.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that the existing DR8 would be revised to reflect the outcomes of the capacity building workshop.
- As a way forward, the meeting was requested to ask the current Oceania representative on the Standing Committee (PNG) to present the revised regional initiative to the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC-32) and to negotiate its approval.

- The meeting further agreed that the Chair (Samoa) would observe at SC32 and assist PNG in the presentation of the revised initiative.
- In revising the regional initiative, the meeting agreed that new text be inserted in the pre-ambular section and new text in paragraph 10 on financial support recognition through the Convention's core budget and lastly, a revision to annex a – to ensure that funds can be accessed in years 2 and 3.

Note: The discussion of session 5 was merged with session 6.

2.6 Session Seven - Next Steps

2.6.1 Election of new Oceania representatives to STRP, Standing Committee and CEPA Panel

The item on the election of new regional representatives to the Standing Committee, Ramsar STRP³ and CEPA focal points was introduced by the Chair and discussed.

Issues arising:

New Zealand sought clarification on the obligations of regional representatives on these committees. In reply, the Ramsar Secretariat pointed out that there is funding support to enable developing countries represented on the Standing Committee to attend meetings. For the STRP, it was mentioned that representation needs to be more continuous and that a resolution was tabled and approved at CoP8 for a new *modus operandi* to get appropriate people into the STRP.

Palau sought clarification on the frequency of STRP meetings. The Ramsar Secretariat mentioned that the STRP meets twice in plenary during a triennium, with first meeting taking place no later than six months after the COP, and the second meeting approximately nine months before the next COP.

New Zealand mentioned that each country should have a database of experts from which to draw representatives for STRP while Australia mentioned that they are the current STRP representatives for the region and that they are not seeking a re-election. However, they further pointed out that they may be able to carry on as the regional STRP representative if no other country wants to. Australia further raised the importance of circulating this responsibility amongst parties of the region.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that there is a need to recommend representatives for each of three bodies that are skilled in area of cultural values for the region
- The meeting further agreed that a decision needs to be made as to the role of the CEPA panel
- As a way forward, the meeting agreed that SPREP would coordinate the nominations from the region for STRP prior to CoP9. In coordinating these nominations, SPREP was requested to compile a list of experts in the region (including those from Australia and New Zealand) to assist Contracting Parties in making their nominations.

DR21 on integrated cross-biome planning and management of wetlands and DR 22 on Cultural Criteria were again revisited during this session for final comments:

Issues arising:

³ Scientific and Technical Review Panel

Bill Phillips sought clarification on the procedure for gaining the endorsement of the Oceania Meeting for the DRs. Peter Bridgewater mentioned that the DRs should be submitted by the Oceania Meeting.

Australia expressed support for the approach suggested by Peter Bridgewater and suggested to the use the word “attributes” instead of “criteria” in DR22. New Zealand support this suggestion. Marshall Islands stated no matter what changes have been made to the DR22, the main thing is that it does not lose its main intention.

Palau sought clarification on the difference between criteria and attributes to which USP replied that it is best to leave these terms to those that can rework them as there are legal implications involved.

Taking on board proposed revisions, DR22 rev.1 was re-introduced by Bill Phillips and comments welcomed from the floor. No further issues or comments were raised.

2.6.2 Logistical Arrangements for CoP9

Logistical arrangements for the upcoming CoP were discussed including the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee, regional meetings, opening ceremony and security arrangements. The Ramsar Secretariat drew the attention of the meeting to the need for proper credentials for delegations from Oceania to CoP9 and the consequences of not having these.

Agreement:

- The meeting agreed that delegations from Oceania would provide proper credentials for CoP9 in order to avoid any entry problems into Uganda.

SPREP reconfirmed to the meeting that they would oversee the preparation and distribution of the meeting report, briefing Paper for CoP and the coordination of a STRP representative for Oceania.

2.7 Session Eight – Meeting Closure

2.7.1 Closing Statements

The meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Fiji for kindly hosting the meeting, the financial support of the meeting made possible by Australia and SPREP. Special appreciation was conveyed to the Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention, Mr. Ramsar Secretariat, for his expert guidance and advice during the meeting. A tremendous word of thanks was also given to Samoa for the exceptional chairing of the meeting, which enabled the meeting to produce an excellent outcome.

MEETING CLOSED

Nadi, September 2005.

Meeting report and photos prepared by the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

List of Annexes:

Annex	Title
1	Meeting Agenda
2	Final list of Participants
3	List of Documents (the meeting documents contained in a CD- Rom distributed before the end of the meeting).
4	Outcomes of the Regional Wetlands Capacity Building Workshop (26-28 September 2005)
5	DR8 rev.1
6	DR21
7	DR22
8	Revised Oceania Regional Support Initiative
9	Official Opening Statement by the Australian delegation