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**SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL
AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE**

Eighth meeting

Montreal, 10-14 March 2003

Item 5.1 of the provisional agenda*

**INLAND WATER ECOSYSTEMS: REVIEW, FURTHER ELABORATION AND
REFINEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK*****Methods and regional guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland water biodiversity for different
types of inland water ecosystems****Note by the Executive Secretary***I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Paragraph 8 (b) of the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems (annex I to decision IV/4 of the Conference of the Parties) states that the work plan to be developed for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) should include the development and dissemination of regional guidelines for rapid assessment of inland water biological diversity for different types of inland water ecosystems. In paragraphs 6 and 7 of the programme of work, the Conference of the Parties requested that in the development of rapid-assessment methodologies the Executive Secretary and SBSTTA should pay special attention to early cooperation with the small island States and the territories of States in which inland water ecosystems suffer from ecological disaster.

2. To facilitate the development of the guidelines, the Executive Secretary commissioned Conservation International to compile information on methods for the rapid assessment of inland water biological diversity and guidelines for their application. He then convened, in collaboration with the Ramsar Bureau, an expert meeting to further develop these guidelines. The meeting was held in Montreal from 2 to 4 December 2002 with participants selected among experts nominated by the national focal points to the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, taking into account a geographical/regional and gender balance. Relevant United Nations and other international organizations were also represented.

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II. GUIDELINES

3. The guidelines developed by the experts are annexed to the report of the expert meeting, which is being circulated as an information document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/INF/5). They are designed to serve the needs of Contracting Parties of both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention. The experts agreed that:

(a) Rapid assessment methods should be used in the context of more comprehensive inventory, assessment and monitoring programmes. In this regard they provided a conceptual framework for their design and implementation;

(b) The guidelines developed are useful for a wide range of countries with different circumstances, including with respect to geographic size, inland water types and institutional capacities, and regional guidelines could be developed in the future, as the need arises, by adapting the current guidelines to regional specificities.

4. The guidelines stress the importance of clearly establishing the purpose as the basis for design and implementation of the assessment. They also emphasize that before deciding on whether a new field survey using rapid assessment methods is necessary, a thorough review of existing knowledge and information, including information held by local communities, should be undertaken.

5. Subsequent steps are then presented in the form of a decision tree to facilitate the selection of appropriate methods to meet the purpose of the assessment. An indication of the categories of information that can be acquired through each of the rapid assessment methods is provided. Summary information on a range of appropriate and available methods suitable for each rapid assessment purpose is included, supported by case-study examples of each type of assessment.

III. FOLLOW-UP

6. The tools presented in the guidelines focus on the assessment of biological diversity at the species level. However, reference is made to tools that will assist in the assessment of ecosystems, and a case-study provides an example of assessing habitat as a surrogate for biological diversity. In addition, the guidelines do not address the full range of socio-economic or cultural values of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. Further elaboration of the guidelines to address ecosystem scale assessments and assessments of socio-economic and cultural components of biological diversity is recommended.

IV. SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice may wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties:

(a) *Welcome* the report of the expert meeting on guidelines on rapid assessment of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems (UNEP/SBSTTA/8/INF/5) and the guidelines annexed thereto;

(b) *Invite* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to use and promote the application of the guidelines, in particular in the circumstances of small island developing States and in the territories of States in which inland water ecosystems suffer from ecological disaster;

(c) *Recognize* that the guidelines are focused on biological factors and, more specifically, on species-level assessments, and that they only touch on ecosystem-level and socio-economic and cultural

aspects relating to the conservation and use of biological diversity, and *request* the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Ramsar Bureau and other relevant organizations, to develop a complementary set of tools to assess the function and health of inland water ecosystems and the socio-economic and cultural values of biological diversity of inland waters;

(d) *Request* the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with relevant organizations, to strengthen capacities, including through practical training, for the application and, as needed, adaptation to local conditions of the guidelines, particularly in small island developing States and in the territories of certain States in which inland water ecosystems suffer from ecological disaster;

(e) *Request* the Executive Secretary to develop a monitoring and reporting system to assess the experiences gathered with respect to the usefulness and applicability of the guidelines, including through the national reports under the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(f) *Invite* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to provide indigenous and local communities with the capacity needed to ensure their active participation in all stages of rapid assessments of biological diversity of inland waters traditionally occupied or used by these communities.
