

Report of the 48th meeting of the Standing Committee

Day 1 – Wednesday 28 January 2015

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. The Secretary General extended a warm welcome to the new Chair of the Standing Committee and to the new Director of IUCN.
2. The Standing Committee heard opening statements by:
 - i. **Doina CATRINOIU**, Romania, Chair of the Ramsar Standing Committee;
 - ii. **Inger ANDERSEN**, Director General of IUCN;
 - iii. **Denis LANDENBERGUE**, Freshwater Programme, WWF International, on behalf of Ramsar's International Organization Partners (IOPs);
 - iv. **Christopher BRIGGS**, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention.

Agenda item 2: Review and adoption of the Provisional Agenda

3. The **Secretary General** referred participants to DOC. SC48-01 Rev.2 *Provisional Agenda* and drew attention to supplementary item 2a concerning a COP12 Draft Resolution (DR) on polar wetlands (DOC. SC48-32) submitted by **Finland**.
4. Following discussion, with contributions from **Chile, Finland** and **USA**, Finland acknowledged that the DR on polar wetlands had been submitted just after the deadline established in the Rules of Procedure. Finland therefore proposed bringing the proposal back for discussion at COP13 and invited all interested Parties to contribute to further development of the text.
5. The **Secretary General** drew attention to proposed adjustments to the timing of agenda items for SC48, most of which had been previously notified to Parties. These included an evening session on Day 2 and an earlier start to the morning session on Day 3. The only new proposed adjustment was to move the Report of the Finance Subgroup from the afternoon of Day 1 to the morning of Day 2 to give the Subgroup sufficient time to complete its deliberations.
6. There being no comments or questions from participants, the agenda was adopted, subject to inclusion of the amendments outlined by the Secretary General.

Decision SC48-01: The Standing Committee adopted the agenda for SC48 (DOC. SC48-01 Rev.2 48th Meeting of the Standing Committee Provisional Agenda), as amended.

Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

7. **The Secretary General** listed participants that needed to be admitted as observers at SC48:
 - i. States that are not Contracting Parties: DPR Korea;

- ii. Others: Gyeongnam Environmental Foundation, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, MedWet Secretariat, Ramsar Regional Centre for East Asia, UNEP, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and four consultants to the Secretariat.

Decision SC48-02: The Standing Committee admitted the observers listed by the Secretary General.

Agenda item 4: Report of the Management Working Group

8. The **Chair**, speaking also in **Romania's** capacity as **Chair of the Management Working Group (MWG)**, referred participants to the following SC48 documents:
 - DOC. SC48-03 *Proposals for amendment to the Rules of Procedure*
 - DOC. SC48-04 *Considerations by the Strategic Plan Working Group on mechanisms to enhance the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention and increasing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other international entities*
 - DOC. SC48-05 *Legal Brief: Opinion on the accommodation of Arabic and other UN languages into the Ramsar Convention*
 - DOC. SC48-17 *Follow up on Resolution XI.1: Languages of the Convention, visibility and stature, ministerial COP segments, and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities*
 - DOC. SC48-18 *Proposed new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention.*
9. The **Secretary General** reported that the following documents had also been produced as a consequence of the MWG's deliberations and were being made available to participants as hard copies and electronically:
 - Report of the Management Working Group;
 - SC48-17Rev.1 – revised text of Draft COP12 Resolution on *Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*;
 - SC48-03Rev.1 – revised text of proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure.
10. He concurred with an observation from **Latvia** that the meeting should, as far as possible, be paperless, but noted that it was sometimes helpful to distribute a limited number of hard copies of newly emerging documents.
11. The **Chair** read out the report of the MWG to allow for interpretation into French and Spanish.
12. In response to points raised by **Chile** and **Denmark**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that substantive discussion of the matters dealt with by the MWG, including relevant Draft Resolutions and the Rules of Procedure, would take place later in the Standing Committee agenda to give all participants the time to read the newly available documents. He confirmed that proposed revisions to the Rules of Procedure would be submitted to COP12 with a corresponding explanatory note from the Standing Committee. This would emphasize the principle that, once adopted, the new Rules of Procedure should automatically apply to future COPs without the need for detailed deliberation on each occasion. Further amendment should only occur in the case of exceptional need.
13. Following a further question from **Denmark**, the **Chair** invited those members of the MWG that had participated in the closed session on staffing matters to meet informally during the day and

to decide among themselves how the deliberations of that session should be reported to the Standing Committee.

Decision SC48-03: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Management Working Group (noting that substantive outputs from the MWG would be addressed later in the agenda of SC48).

Agenda item 5: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

14. The **Chair** referred participants to documents:
 - DOC. SC48-04 *Considerations by the Strategic Plan Working Group on mechanisms to enhance the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention and increasing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other international entities*
 - DOC. SC48-19 *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2021*.
15. The **Co-Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group – SPWG (Finland)** reported on a busy year since SC47. She listed the membership of the SPWG and recalled that it had been Co-Chaired by France. A consultant, Mr Peter Hislair, had been hired to work with the SPWG and the Secretariat. Three meetings of the Group had been held and a version of the Draft Strategic Plan had been made available for discussion at all pre-COP regional meetings. The Group's fourth meeting had been held on 26 January 2015 and a number of amendments to the draft Strategic Plan were being incorporated as a result. The draft Plan for 2016–2021 included many new elements when compared with the current Strategic Plan. These included a greater emphasis on continuous monitoring and evaluation, national priority setting and oversight by the Standing Committee. Thanks were due to the members of the SPWG, the consultant, the Secretariat, and hundreds of individuals actively involved in the process.
16. In response to a question from **Bolivia**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that the revised version of the Strategic Plan would be circulated to SC48 participants as soon as possible.
17. The **USA** confirmed its satisfaction with the work undertaken by the SPWG and hoped that the Standing Committee would find it a useful and constructive effort.

Decision SC48-04: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (noting that the substantive outputs of the Group's work would be discussed later in the agenda of SC48).

Agenda item 6: Progress with preparations for COP12: Report of the Subgroup on COP12

18. The **Chair** referred participants to documents:
 - DOC. SC48-06 *Progress with preparations for COP12*
 - DOC. SC48-07 *Guidance to Contracting Parties about the operation of COP12*.
 - DOC SC48-13 *Provisional COP12 Agenda*
19. The **Chair of the Subgroup on COP12 (Uruguay)** reported that the Subgroup had dealt with three items:
 - i. Progress of COP12 preparations by Uruguay
 - ii. Progress of COP12 preparations by the Secretariat
 - iii. Ramsar Awards

20. The Subgroup had determined that Uruguay had fulfilled its mandate with regard to the MOU governing responsibilities for preparation of COP12. The Subgroup had also approved the provisional agenda for the COP, and had held a closed session on the Ramsar Awards.
21. **Colombia, Denmark and Uganda** thanked **Uruguay** for its efforts in preparing for COP12.
22. In response to a question from the **Islamic Republic of Iran** the **Secretary General** confirmed that SC48 discussion of Draft Resolutions for COP12 would begin during the morning plenary session of Day 2.
23. Responding to a question from **Denmark**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that, as at previous COPs, the COP12 Finance Committee would be composed of the members of the Finance Subgroup and that the Committee would be established early during the COP to maximise the time available for negotiations.
24. **Uruguay**, in response to a question from **Uganda**, confirmed that while no high-level segment was planned for COP12, everything would be done to ensure the best possible experience for Ministers attending the COP. In the case of Parties that did not have a Uruguayan consulate, all the necessary arrangements would be handled from Montevideo, on the basis of pre-registration information to be communicated via the Secretariat.
25. The **Chair** invited the Standing Committee to approve the provisional agenda for COP12 (DOC SC48-13).
26. In response to a question from **Chile**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that a full, annotated agenda would be prepared, as for previous COPs, once the main elements of the provisional agenda had been approved.
27. There being no further comments or questions, the **Chair** concluded that the provisional agenda for COP12 had been approved.

Decision SC48-05: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Subgroup on COP12.

Decision SC48-06: The Standing Committee approved the provisional agenda for COP12 (DOC. SC48-13).

Agenda item 7: Selection of Ramsar Convention Awards laureates
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28. The **Secretary General** noted that the Subgroup on COP12 had met on 27 January 2015 to consider the Ramsar Awards, with participation restricted to members of the Subgroup, all of whom were present at SC48 with the exception of Fiji. He recalled the procedure during the preceding months, which had included a call for nominations for Ramsar Awards to be presented at COP12 in the three categories of Wise Use; Innovation; and Young Wetland Champion. A total of 68 nominations had been received. Consideration had also been given to the possibility of presenting Merit Awards to recognise long-term contributions of institutions and/or individuals to wetlands. The winner of each of the three Ramsar Awards would receive a certificate, a work of art, a prize of USD 10,000 and an invitation to attend COP12. With the exception of staff time, there were no costs to the Convention's core budget; all other funding was being provided through the Danone-Evian Partnership. The means of recognizing the winner or winners of any Merit Award, in addition to a certificate, had yet to be finalized, and was subject to the availability of funds.

29. Information on three shortlisted nominations in each category had been submitted to the Subgroup on COP12 (in DOC. SC48-08 *Ramsar Awards*, circulation of which had been restricted). The Chair of the Subgroup would be invited to explain to a closed session of voting members of the Standing Committee only about the Subgroup's recommendations with regard to the proposed laureates from among the shortlisted nominations. The voting members of the Standing Committee were:
- Africa** – Burundi, Guinea, South Africa, Tunisia; **Asia** – Cambodia, Republic of Korea, United Arab Emirates; **Europe** – Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France; **Neotropics** – Chile, Cuba, Guatemala; **North America** – Canada; **Oceania** – Fiji; **Host of COP11** – Romania; and **Host of COP12** – Uruguay. Of these, only Fiji was not present at SC48.
30. Discussion of this agenda item then continued in closed session of voting members of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 9: Report of the Secretary General and Secretariat Work Plan for 2015

31. Complementing his written report (DOC. SC48-11 *Report of the Secretary General and the Secretariat*), the **Secretary General** made a presentation highlighting:
- The critical role of wetlands in sustainable development, including as a source of water and food, as well as their importance for mitigating climate change.
 - The current alarming pace of wetland loss and lack of wide understanding of wetland benefits.
 - His vision for Ramsar, as the Wetland Convention, to slow, stop and reverse the loss and degradation of wetlands, through four key areas of work:
 - Communications and outreach;
 - Capacity building for countries;
 - Partnerships to help achieve goals (including the concept of a 'Gland Challenge' on wetlands, comparable to the 'Bonn Challenge' on forests);
 - Measuring the status and values of wetlands (in the absence of clear current information on global extent of wetlands and rates of loss).
32. The **Chair** opened the floor for comments or questions.
33. Interventions were made by **Bolivia, Chile, South Africa, Uruguay** and by the observer from **ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability**, all of whom welcomed the Secretary General's presentation. Among the specific points raised were:
- The importance of not focusing too narrowly on the economic value of wetlands at the expense of recognizing their wider values (Bolivia);
 - The need to focus on educating children as a key to changing public awareness and perceptions about wetlands (Chile);
 - The need to raise Ramsar's profile generally, but especially in relation to other Conventions, the private sector and civil society (Uruguay);
 - The importance of Ramsar documenting and making available best practice, for example in wetland restoration, to be shared with Contracting Parties and others (South Africa);
 - The need for vertical integration at national level, taking into account the contributions from cities and local governments (ICLEI).

Several participants also requested that a transcript of the Secretary General's presentation, and/or video highlights of key sections, be made available for use by Parties.

34. The **Secretary General** welcomed these observations and suggestions and promised to look into means of providing access to all or parts of his presentation.
35. The **Chair** recalled that the document for this agenda item (SC48-11 Annex I) included the Secretariat's Workplan for 2015 and that the Standing Committee was invited to approve the Workplan.
36. There being no comments or questions from the floor, the Workplan was approved.

Decision SC48-07: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Secretary General and approved the Secretariat's Workplan for 2015.

Agenda item 10: Report of the STRP Chair
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37. The **Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**, Dr Royal Gardner, made a brief presentation to highlight elements of his written report (DOC. SC48-12 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel*). These included:
 - Progress on STRP High Priority Tasks, among others the State of the World's Wetlands (SOWWS) project;
 - Advisory functions of the STRP (e.g. in relation to site removal from the Montreux Record; Draft Resolutions for COP12; Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2021; CMS/FAO Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds; and country-specific assistance);
 - Work in relation to the International Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
38. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments and questions.
39. Responding to a question from the **USA**, the **STRP Chair** outlined the expected process and timeframe for finalizing the SOWWS report. A draft would be circulated within the coming two weeks. A further two to three weeks would be required to process comments, with a final period of up to five weeks being needed to finalise the document in collaboration with communications colleagues. The aim was to minimise printing costs by moving as far as possible to online publication, though a limited print run was anticipated.
40. **Chile, South Africa** and **Uruguay** welcomed the STRP Chair's diligent and timely engagement with IPBES.
41. Replying to a question from **Chile**, the **STRP Chair** noted that the current IPBES Work Programme was now fixed for the next several years. However there were clear wetland connections under several of the Thematic Assessments being conducted by IPBES, which offered potential opportunities for collaboration. It is also important that the STRP and Parties remain alert and ready to contribute when the call for proposals for the next five-year Work Programme is disseminated.
42. **Uruguay** thanked the STRP for its advice and support in relation to the process of removing the Bañados del Este Ramsar Site from the Montreux Record. A great deal had already been accomplished at the Site and the corresponding experience and lessons learned might prove an interesting example to other Parties.

43. The representative of **Oman** thanked the STRP Chair for visiting his country. Oman had very recently established a National Wetland Committee and would soon initiate a project to develop a National Wetland Strategy.
44. The **USA** acknowledged the close collaboration of the STRP and its Chair during the US-led process to reform delivery of scientific and technical advice to the Convention.

Decision SC48-08: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Agenda item 11: Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel

45. The **Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel (South Africa)** recalled that the Panel had met twice since SC46, in April 2013 (6th Meeting) and in December 2013 (7th Meeting). The outcomes of these meetings had been reported to SC47 in DOC. SC47-18. Development of the new CEPA Programme of Work 2016-2021 had been the most important task during the triennium. The current CEPA Programme covered the period to COP12, so the new Work Programme, entitled the *Wetlands and People Programme* and contained in DOC. SC48-23, together with the corresponding DR, needed to be endorsed by SC48 for forwarding to COP12.

Decision SC48-09: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel (recognizing that detailed consideration of the DR and CEPA Work Programme 2016–2021 would take place under a later SC48 agenda item).

Agenda item 12: Report on Communications
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46. The Secretariat's **Head of Communications** (Camilla Chalmers) made a presentation covering:
 - The wider context for communications in relation to the new Strategic Plan;
 - The Ramsar CEPA *Wetlands and People Programme 2016–2021* (including the corresponding COP12 DR, the vision of "People taking action for the wise use of wetlands", and the eight strategies for delivering Ramsar CEPA);
 - World Wetlands Day 2015 (theme "Wetlands for our Future"; web-based focus with downloadable materials and extensive social media campaign; covering an entire month rather than just one day);
 - Review of STRP guidance materials (development of first four Fact Sheets to build awareness of wetland benefits and challenges);
 - The concepts for (i) a "Ramsar Effect" publication to highlight the specific role of Ramsar in making positive changes for wetland conservation happen, and (ii) a "Ramsar Compendium" of attractive summaries for the Ramsar Sites in each region or Party;
 - Update on Ramsar website development (including maintenance of the old website until the end of 2015, by which time migration to the new website should have been completed);
 - "Bringing the RSIS to life" (a demonstration version of a video was screened).
47. The **Chair** opened the floor to comments and questions. Interventions were made by **Burundi, Chile, Cuba, Finland, Guatemala, Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda** and **USA**, many of whom complemented the Secretariat for bringing new energy and vision to the Convention's communications activities.
48. Among the specific points raised were the following:

- The need to consider the limited access of some Parties, especially in the Africa region, to online communications materials and to continue making available printed copies (particularly for World Wetlands Day) in such cases;
 - The importance of making the Secretariat’s Communications Plan available to Parties and of seeing Parties as partners in developing and delivering the Plan;
 - The importance of ensuring that the Secretariat’s communications activities are fully aligned with both the Strategic Plan and CEPA Work Programmes (current and future);
 - The need for messages that would resonate with decision makers and the community at large, especially in relation to the issues that smaller developing countries had to deal with;
 - The potentially significant role of social media in raising the Convention’s profile and in particular in mobilizing public opinion to bring pressure to bear on governments.
49. In response to a question from **South Africa**, the **Head of Communications** apologised for the unforeseen challenges associated with migrating from the old website to the new site. A temporary staff member had been employed to work on this and a contract was being finalized with the host of the old website to ensure that broken links would be fixed within five working days of signature of the contract.
50. Replying to a question from the **USA**, the **Head of Communications** explained that it had been necessary to establish a separate website for World Wetlands Day in order to handle the anticipated volume of images through the photographic competition. This could not easily be accommodated through Ramsar’s main website.
51. The observer from the **MedWet Secretariat** advised careful consideration of the messages being transmitted; positive messages would have much greater traction than more negative messages about wetland loss and degradation. In addition, MedWet and the other Regional Initiatives were at the forefront of relations with Parties, so it was essential that they were part and parcel of the communications outreach of the Convention, especially in relation to the COP.
52. The **Head of Communications** confirmed that it was her aim to ensure a balance in favour of positive measures and pledged to ensure that the Regional Initiatives were fully involved.

Decision SC48-10: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Secretariat with regard to Communications.

Agenda item 13: Report on Partnerships

53. The Secretariat’s **Head of Partnerships** (Chris Perceval) made a presentation highlighting:
- Development of compelling partnership products (focus on development of six areas, including the Global Partnership for Wetlands Restoration – an additional SC48 side event on this initiative would to be held at 2.00 pm on Thursday 29 January);
 - Fundraising and resource mobilization (including new voluntary funds secured, progress towards securing further funding, and planning of future resource mobilization);
 - Working with partners (referring to specific partnerships in the governmental/inter-governmental sector, academic sector, private sector and with NGOs/IOPs);
 - Promoting Ramsar’s work (covering the Secretariat’s participation as a speaker and/or co-organiser at selected international events);
 - Development of a COP12 Draft Resolution on Partnerships (to be addressed on Day 2 of SC48);
 - Supporting the concept of partnership (aiming to balance the many needs with the greatest opportunities);

- COP delegate sponsorship (work with potential Contracting Party donors to follow up a request sent out by the Secretary General in November 2014).
54. In response to question from **South Africa** about the role of the Ramsar Secretariat in the Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration, the **Head of Partnerships** confirmed that this point would be addressed in detail at the side event planned for the following day. In brief, the initiative was still at a very early stage of development but would be led and owned by Parties. It was the Secretariat's role to bring partners together and to enable a conversation to happen. NORAD had been quick to indicate that the initiative responded to their priorities and so the Secretariat had worked with the Administrative Authorities of NORAD's priority countries to develop five projects. These were expected to produce results within a short (six-month) timeframe.
 55. **Switzerland** requested greater clarification on several aspects of the report on Partnerships. There were many activities and steps but the concrete targets and outputs were unclear. Parties would like to see a road map and a much more strategic approach. It would be interesting to know, for example, if the World Economic Forum and World Council for Sustainable Business Development (WBCSD) had been contacted. Switzerland was also a bit puzzled that someone had apparently already been engaged to work on the Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration. There needed to be increased understanding by the Parties and this required more consultation from the Secretariat.
 56. The **Secretary General** accepted that the Secretariat had been at fault. When approached by NORAD with specific funds for wetland restoration, he considered this to be a great opportunity, but had not consulted with the SC. The Secretariat had worked with selected Parties – who were unanimously interested – and with IUCN to develop projects. However this would not be the normal role for the Secretariat in developing the Global Partnership further. The Partnership was not about the projects themselves, but rather working with Parties, IOPs and both the public and private sectors to construct a partnership that would act as an umbrella under which work going on in wetland restoration would be logged as well as a clearing house for ideas and funders to exchange views. To construct that Partnership would require time and energy. The Secretariat would like to have a very much more detailed and logical structure to take forward the Partnership and looked forward to an ongoing dialogue to achieve this.
 57. Responding to one of the points raised by Switzerland, the **Head of Partnerships** confirmed that the WBCSD had been strongly engaged by the Secretariat. He also acknowledged the important contributions made by IOPs.
 58. **Finland** shared the concerns of Switzerland but felt that things were heading in the right direction. It was good that the Strategic Plan was being used to provide a framework for work on partnerships.
 59. **Denmark** also felt that things were headed in the right direction, but was worried that the proposed areas of work were hard to achieve success with current resources. It was also clear that GEF and other large donors had funded hundreds of projects concerning wetlands. It was important that everyone involved in funding and implementing wetland restoration was made aware of the existence of the Convention on Wetlands and that it had 168 Parties who had identified clear priorities. GEF and others should require that Ramsar priorities and recommendations be addressed in all applications for funding.

60. **Uganda** underlined the need to bring into the process stakeholders who were the 'end users' or beneficiaries of wetland restoration projects. This could perhaps be done via the Regional Ramsar Centres. There was also a need to look at innovative ways of accessing the International Waters Programme of GEF – of which Ramsar was not a direct beneficiary – as well as means of tapping into the GEF Small Grants Fund.
61. **Tunisia** provided information concerning the FAO's Forest Partnership and Mountain Partnership. The national programmatic engagement undertaken through these Partnerships had been more effective than conventional projects.
62. The observer from **Wetlands International**, speaking on behalf of the IOPs, stressed that there was an opportunity that should be followed up in the Convention to benefit from existing partnerships and to bring about better synergies. The IOPs welcomed the Global Partnership initiative, but there had so far been a process gap when it came to development of a shared vision. The IOPs were already mobilizing huge wetland restoration initiatives. There was an opportunity to add value, but this required a few more steps in the process. It was also important to remember that conserving remaining intact wetlands was equally important as restoring lost and degraded wetlands.
63. The **Head of Partnerships** agreed that there was a need for more specificity and greater consultation in relation to the Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration. He reiterated that the initiative was still at a very early stage but assured participants that their messages had been heard clearly.

Decision SC48-11: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Secretariat with regard to Partnerships.

Agenda item 14: Other matters arising from SC47 decisions

64. The **Secretary General** recalled that COP10 had adopted Resolution X.27 *Wetlands and urbanization*. During SC47 the Secretariat had reported on a workshop hosted by the Republic of Korea that aimed to develop a wetland city accreditation system. Decision SC47-27 had asked the Secretariat to develop a document on this issue for consideration at SC48. The result was a COP12 Draft Resolution, included in DOC. SC48-29.

Agenda management

65. The **Secretary General** suggested that in the interests of time-saving the meeting might continue with consideration of the revised Rules of Procedure (DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1) resulting from the Management Working Group.
66. Standing Committee members, including **Chile, Finland** and **France** urged that this item be deferred to Day 2 to enable time for Parties to review and consult on the document.
67. The **USA** noted for the benefit of Parties that DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1 showed two alternative formulations for Rule 53. The second formulation had been submitted by the USA with the aim of avoiding the reopening of lengthy discussion of Rules of Procedure at every COP. The USA delegation would be happy to discuss this proposal informally with colleagues.
68. The **Secretary General** recognized the wish of Standing Committee members to defer discussion of the revised Rules of Procedure but stressed that the large volume of substantive

items that remained to be dealt with would likely require working well into the evening of Day 2, potentially continuing without interpretation beyond 9.00 pm.

69. **The Chair** confirmed that the Day 2 plenary session would commence at 10.00 am.

Day 2 – Thursday 29 January 2015

Agenda item 8: Report of the Subgroup on Finance

70. **The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance (Canada)** reported that the Subgroup (composed of Burundi, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Fiji (absent) and Republic of Korea, together with Finland as the previous Subgroup Chair and with the participation of the Secretary General and Finance Officer in an *ex officio* capacity) had met on 27 and 28 January 2015 to review the following SC48 documents:

- DOC. SC48-09 Rev.1 *Ramsar financial matters 2014 / 2015*
- DOC. SC48-10 *Contracting Parties with outstanding annual contributions*
- DOC. SC48-20 Rev.1 *Budget scenarios for 2016-2018 and Draft Resolution on financial and budgetary matters for the 2016-2018 triennium.*

71. She reported the outcomes of the Subgroup's deliberations, including recommendations to the Standing Committee, grouped under seven headings, as indicated in paragraphs 72–78.

72. 2014 core budget

- The approved Core budget for 2014 was CHF 5,081,000.
- The surplus at 27 January 2015 was CHF 345,000 (updated figure).
- The Subgroup's recommendation for reallocation of the surplus was:
 - Provisions (staff) CHF 100,000
 - ENB (COP 12 support) CHF 50,000
 - Ramsar Advisory Missions(Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Uganda) CHF 75,000
 - Staff Training CHF 20,000
 - Ramsar Regional Centres (four capacity building workshops on Strategic Plan; CHF 10,000 each) CHF 40,000
 - Communications* CHF 60,000
- The Subgroup further recommended that the Standing Committee should examine the status of these items at SC49 and reallocate any unspent/unplanned funds, as necessary.

* Approximately CHF 20,000 each for STRP translation; site manager publication; and post COP priorities.

73. 2014 non-core budget

- Voluntary contributions of as of 31 December 2014 totalled CHF 1,047,000.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee thank the following Parties and partners that had provided voluntary contributions in 2014: Canada, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and USA; Danone and Star Alliance; UNEP-ROWA; WWF International and WWF (Angola).

74. 2015 Core Budget reallocation

- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee agree to minor changes in the COP11 approved core budget for a variety of line items (as presented), noting that the

overall budget remained the same, there were no increases in total travel costs, and provision was made for a new Regional Officer for Africa and a new IT Officer in 2015.

75. COP12 preparations

- Uruguay remained fully committed to a successful COP.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee take note of Uruguay's transfer of USD 419,971 (CHF 405,314) in November 2014 and thank Uruguay for this prompt payment.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee should note the need to raise a further CHF 1.2 million during the coming months to sponsor delegate participation at COP12. Parties and Secretariat should be urged to make COP12 fundraising a priority.

76. Small Grants Fund

- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee should request the Secretariat to refrain from launching a request for new project proposals for the 2015 Small Grants Fund cycle.

77. Outstanding contributions

- 28 countries had outstanding contributions of three years or more.
- The total amount of all unpaid contributions was CHF 1,067,000.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee note the current status of Parties' outstanding annual contributions and encourage the Secretariat, working with Finance Subgroup members, to continue to take actions to resolve this.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee take note of the actions of the Secretariat since SC47 to outstanding contributions, specifically:
 - Sending reminders and statements via diplomatic and other government channels;
 - Visits and follow-up communication to Geneva-based permanent missions of Parties with arrears;
 - Sustained verbal and written reminders to National Focal Points and Administrative Authority contacts; and
 - Reminders to African Contracting Parties of the Ouagadougou Commitments and formal notifications in January 2014, advising them of contribution arrears and the realities and risks relating to receipt of future voluntary funding from certain donor Contracting Parties.
- The Subgroup recommended to the Standing Committee not to take any punitive measures with regard to Parties with outstanding contributions.

78. 2016–2018 Budget scenarios

- Three scenarios were presented in DOC. SC48-20 Rev.1: 0% increase; 2% increase; and 4% increase.
- The Subgroup engaged in preliminary discussion of the three scenarios.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee should approve the draft scenarios presented in SC48-20 Rev.1 for use as a starting point in discussions at COP12.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee should request the Secretariat to add a CEPA line and a Strategic Plan line to the draft non-core budget items outlined in Annex 2 of SC48-20 Rev.1, and provide background documentation to support all items listed in the non-core budget in advance of COP12.
- The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee request the Secretariat to provide Parties with a document that outlined the additional costs to each Party under the 2% and 4% scenarios, using the 2016 assessed contributions as the baseline, as well as an

organization chart stating employment percentage and grade of position in advance of COP12.

In response to a clarification sought by **South Africa**, the Chair of the Finance Subgroup confirmed that final versions of all the budget and finance papers would be made available to Parties in advance of the 1 March deadline.

Decision SC48-12: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Subgroup on Finance, including all of the Subgroup's recommendations. Specifically, the Standing Committee:

- approved the Subgroup's proposed reallocation of the 2014 core budget surplus and confirmed that the status of the reallocations would be reviewed at SC49;
- recorded its thanks to all Parties and partners that had made voluntary contributions in 2014;
- agreed to minor changes in the COP11 approved core budget for a variety of line items (as shown in the Subgroup Chair's report);
- thanked Uruguay for its prompt transfer of funds for COP12 preparations;
- took note of the need to raise a further CHF 1.2 million to support COP12 delegate travel;
- requested the Secretariat not to launch a call for Small Grants Fund proposals in 2015;
- took note of the current status of Parties' outstanding annual contributions and encouraged the Secretariat, working with Finance Subgroup members, to continue to take actions to resolve this issue;
- took note of the measures taken by the Secretariat to reduce outstanding contributions;
- decided not to apply punitive measures to Parties with outstanding contributions;
- approved the draft budget scenarios for 2016–2018 for presentation to COP12;
- requested the Secretariat to add a CEPA line and a Strategic Plan line to the draft non-core budget items outlined in Annex 2 of DOC. SC48-20 Rev.1, and to provide background documentation to support all items listed in the non-core budget in advance of COP12;
- requested the Secretariat to provide Parties with a document that outlined the additional costs to each Party under the 2% and 4% scenarios, using the 2016 assessed contributions as the baseline, as well as an organization chart stating employment percentage and grade of position in advance of COP12.

Agenda item 15: Review of COP12 Draft Resolutions

79. The **Secretary General** explained that the DRs being presented to COP12 by the Standing Committee would need to be finalized by the end of SC48. In the case of those DRs submitted by Contracting Parties, the relevant Party was asked to take on board the Standing Committee's comments and proposed amendments, to make revisions as appropriate, and to deliver to the Secretariat for distribution to the SC48 participants for their approval.
80. The **Chair** noted that a maximum of three minutes would be permitted for the introduction of each Draft Resolution (DR).

Draft Resolution SC48–03 Rev.1 *Rules of Procedure*

81. The **Secretary General** referred participants to DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1, which incorporated as additional tracked changes the recommendations of the Management Working Group from its meeting on 26 January 2015.
82. The **Chair** urged participants to focus on the tracked changes only, as the original version of the document had been available to Parties to discuss and comment on for some time.

83. **Denmark** underlined that the document presented for COP12 should clearly show (as tracked changes) deletions from the original Rules of Procedure in addition to new text. In Denmark's view it was not necessary to show as tracked changes paragraphs that had simply been moved from one part of the document to another.
84. In response to a question from **Denmark**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that the cover note from the original version of DOC. SC48-03 would also comprise part of the document transmitted to COP12. It had been omitted from DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1 in the interests of saving paper.
85. Comments, including proposed amendments, were made by **Canada, Chile, Cuba, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Switzerland** and **USA**.
86. Following discussion, the **Chair** invited **Chile, Islamic Republic of Iran** and the **USA** to consult with one other and to come forward as soon as possible with an agreed text for Rule 52, which currently had two alternative formulations. Other Parties that had tabled specific amendments were asked to submit their proposals in writing to the Secretariat.
87. The **USA** subsequently reported that consensus had been reached on Rule 52 and read out the text agreed with **Chile** and **Islamic Republic of Iran**.
88. There being no other comments from the floor, the **Chair** concluded that DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1 had been approved for forwarding to COP12 subject to inclusion of the amendments agreed.

Decision SC48-13: The Standing Committee approved forwarding DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1 Rules of Procedure, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-18 Rev.1: Proposed new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention

89. The **Chair** referred participants to DOC. SC48-18 Rev.1, which reflected discussions and recommendations of the Management Working Group meeting held on 26 January 2015. She opened the floor for comments.
90. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Finland, Denmark** and **Latvia**.
91. **Argentina** referred to Annex 2 of DOC. SC48-18 Rev.1 and underlined that a number of the organizations mentioned, including Flora & Fauna International (FFI), Global Water Partnership (GWP), and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, needed to take into account that certain territories were the subject of sovereignty disputes recognized by the United Nations, and to use the established dual nomenclature for those territories in their documentation.
92. The **Secretariat** recalled that during the regional preparatory meeting for COP12 **Argentina** had asked the Secretariat to write to the organizations concerned, drawing their attention to Argentina's observations. The Secretariat had done so and to date had received a reply from GWP confirming their readiness to apply dual nomenclature for the relevant territories. Formal responses had not yet been received from FFI or ICLEI.
93. **Argentina** thanked the Secretariat for this update, which would be transmitted to the authorities in Buenos Aires.

94. The observer from **ICLEI** undertook to ensure that an official reply was transmitted to the Secretariat as soon as possible.
95. The **USA** (Chair of the Committee responsible for leading intersessional work on the delivery of scientific and technical advice) thanked colleagues for their comments and proposals, and briefly responded to some of them.
96. The **Chair of the STRP** confirmed that points he had raised during the Management Working Group had been addressed through the amendments made to the document. With respect to the STRP's role at COP12 (an issue raised by **Denmark**) he was in discussion with the Secretariat on appropriate representation of STRP expertise.
97. The **Secretary General** invited participants that had tabled amendments to transmit these in writing to the Secretariat.
98. The **Chair** invited the **USA** to confer with **Finland** and others and to bring forward consensus amendments so that the DR could be approved by the Standing Committee for forwarding to COP12.
99. Following these additional consultations, the **USA** read out a number of consensus amendments.
100. There being no other comments from the floor, the **Chair** concluded that DOC. SC48-18 Rev.1 had been approved for forwarding to COP12 subject to inclusion of the amendments tabled by the **USA**.

Decision SC48-14: The Standing Committee approved forwarding DOC. SC48-18 Rev.1 Proposed new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-17 Rev.1: *Follow up on Resolution XI.1: Languages of the Convention, visibility and stature, ministerial COP segments, and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities*

101. The **Chair** referred participants to DOC. SC48-17 Rev.1, which reflected discussions and recommendations of the Management Working Group meeting held on 26 January 2015, and opened the floor for comments.
102. Comments, including proposed amendments, were made by **Denmark, Islamic Republic of Iran, Switzerland, UAE** and **USA**.
103. The **Chair** invited the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **UAE** to confer and to come forward with proposed wording of paragraph 9 of the DR.
104. The **UAE** subsequently tabled a proposed amendment to paragraph 9 of the DR, which was accepted by the meeting.
105. There being no other comments from the floor, the **Chair** concluded that DOC. SC48-17 Rev.1 had been approved for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the agreed amendments tabled by the **UAE** and other Parties.

Decision SC48-15: The Standing Committee approved forwarding DOC. SC48-17 Rev.1 *Follow up on Resolution XI.1: Languages of the Convention, visibility and stature, ministerial COP segments, and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.*

Draft Resolution SC48-19 Rev.1: *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2021*

106. The **Chair** referred participants to DOC. SC48-19 Rev.1, which reflected discussions and recommendations of the Strategic Plan Working Group meeting held on 26 January 2015, and opened the floor for comments.

107. Comments, including proposed amendments, were made by **Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Japan, South Africa, Switzerland** and **USA** and by the observers from the **MedWet Secretariat** and from **BirdLife International** and **WWF** on behalf of the IOPs.

108. In response to a question from **Uruguay**, the **Secretariat** outlined measures being taken to ensure the quality and consistency of all language versions of DR texts being forwarded for consideration by COP12.

109. **Finland**, as Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group, undertook to collate the comments, to hold further consultations as necessary, and to report back to the meeting.

110. **Finland** subsequently presented a summary of proposed amendments; these were agreed by the meeting.

111. The **Chair** concluded that DOC. SC48-19 Rev.1 had been approved for forwarding to COP12 subject to inclusion of the amendments summarized by Finland.

112. **WWF** was concerned that its proposed amendment, tabled on behalf of the IOPs, had not been mentioned by **Finland**.

113. **Finland** indicated that it had not received WWF's proposal in writing and therefore had not been able to accommodate it.

Decision SC48-16: The Standing Committee approved forwarding DOC. SC48-19 Rev.1 *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2021, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.*

Additional item: Announcement by **UAE** regarding COP13

114. Prior to continuing with consideration of DRs, the **Chair** invited a statement from **UAE**.

115. **UAE** reported that its offer to host COP13, which had first been made at SC47, now had the approval of the Cabinet, and a letter confirming this had been sent by the Minister of the Environment to the Secretariat.

116. The **Secretary General** thanked UAE for making this generous offer in good time.

117. **Tunisia** noted the support of the Africa regional grouping for the UAE proposal.

Draft Resolution SC48-29: *Ramsar Community Accreditation* (submitted by Tunisia / Republic of Korea)

118. **Tunisia**, as the submitting Contracting Party, introduced the proposed DR, underlining the willingness of people to take an interest in local Ramsar Sites and their wise use. He noted that Resolution XI.11 on *Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands* had called for a “wetland city accreditation” scheme to be explored, and that through Decision SC47-27, the Standing Committee had asked the Secretariat to prepare a document for SC48. The DR was intended to promote wise use through engagement of communities with economic, social and cultural links with wetlands, and of local decision-makers. He noted the proposed “Ramsar Community” label, the criteria for eligibility and the oversight process described in the DR.
119. Comments were made by **Canada, Chile, Denmark, France, Guinea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, UAE** and **USA**. These included proposals for amendments and for the further development of the framework for approval by Standing Committee after COP12.
120. **Republic of Korea** noted the positive results of a related pilot scheme which it had trialled, and offered to provide more information to interested Contracting Parties.
121. The **STRP Chair** also made comments, noting that the STRP had not been involved in the drafting of this DR, but had provided feedback.
122. **ICLEI** expressed support for the scheme and offered to contribute to the amendment process.
123. Following discussion, the **Chair** invited Tunisia to resubmit a new version of the document by 09:30 the following morning (Friday 30 January). The deadline for participants to submit their proposed amendments in writing to Tunisia would be 22:00 on Thursday 29 January.
124. Following a request from **South Africa**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that the Secretariat’s Senior Regional Advisor for Africa would provide support in highlighting the cost impact of the amended DR.

Draft Resolution SC48-22: *Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention and an Application for IOP Status*

125. The Secretariat’s **Head of Partnerships** Chris Perceval introduced the document. He explained its structure, with one DR covering Resource Mobilization, Partnership and the application by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) for IOP status, and three annexes (A, B and C) with the principal Annex A being a proposed Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework. He outlined its objectives in support of the Convention and the 4th Strategic Plan, and invited Standing Committee to consider whether it was achievable, useful and relevant.
126. Comments and proposals for amendments were made by **Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, South Africa, Switzerland, Uruguay** and **USA**, which included proposals for amendments and for the further development of the framework for approval by Standing Committee 50 after COP12.
127. In response to a question from **Canada** on the timeframe for approval of the Framework after COP12, the **Secretary General** suggested submission of a workplan and framework for the approval of SC50 taking place immediately following COP12.

128. The **Secretary General** confirmed that a revised text, incorporating the requested amendments and with the annexes removed, would be submitted for SC48 to consider on the last day of its meeting.

Additional procedural discussion: Standing Committee approval of final versions of DRs submitted by Contracting Parties

129. The **USA** sought clarification on the status of (and subsequent process for) DRs which had not been finalized and approved by the end of Standing Committee.

130. **Denmark** stated its understanding that SC48 had to approve the final versions of DRs produced by the Secretariat on behalf of the Standing Committee, but that in the case of those submitted by Contracting Parties, SC48 would only advise the Party or Parties concerned, which would then be responsible for making amendments prior to the final submission deadline.

131. The **Secretary General** advised, after consulting with the Senior Legal Advisor, that proposed DRs submitted by Contracting Parties also needed to be approved in their final form by the Standing Committee, by the end of the present meeting, in order to be submitted to COP12.

132. **Denmark** thanked the Secretary General for the clarification, and expressed the view that such an interpretation was not the intended or appropriate aim of the Rules of Procedure.

133. The **Secretary General** asked that all proposed amendments to documents discussed in the session be communicated electronically to both the submitting Contracting Parties and to the relevant Secretariat focal points by 22:00 on 29 January 2015 for resubmission to SC48 during the morning of 30 January.

Additional item: announcement of Ramsar Award laureates

134. The **Chair** announced the Ramsar Award laureates selected during the closed session of the Standing Committee held on 28 January 2015:

- The Award for Wetland Wise Use: **Ms Gizelle Hassan**, Israel
- The Award for Wetland Innovation: **Oceanium**, Senegal
- The Award for Young Wetland Champions: **Fundación Humedales Bogotá**, Colombia
- Merit Award recipients: **Tour du Valat research centre**, France; **Professor William Mitsch**, USA; and **Professor Gea Jae Joo**, Republic of Korea.

135. Prior to closing the afternoon session, the **Chair** drew the attention of delegates to the draft report of Day 1 of the meeting, which had been circulated for review and eventual approval.

Draft Resolution SC48-27: *Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands (submitted by Greece)*

136. **Greece** made a brief introductory presentation.

137. The **Chair** opened the floor for comments.

138. **Denmark**, supported by **Czech Republic**, and speaking on behalf of the European Region endorsed the text for forwarding to COP12.

139. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Canada** and **USA**.

140. The Secretariat's **Senior Adviser for Europe** asked that written texts of proposed amendments be submitted. He noted that all the Parties concerned had been consulted at the relevant pre-COP regional meetings.

141. **Greece** undertook to incorporate all of the comments made and to present a revised text to the meeting by the morning of Day 3, 30 January.

Draft Resolution SC48-20 Rev.1: *Budget scenarios for 2016-2018 and Draft Resolution on financial and budgetary matters for the 2016-2018 triennium*

142. The **Secretary General** briefly introduced the document and recalled that some adjustments were required in the light of the Finance Subgroup's report, presented earlier in the day.

143. The **Chair** opened the floor for comments.

144. **Denmark**, speaking on behalf of the European Region, endorsed the text for forwarding to COP12.

145. Proposed amendments were tabled by the **USA**.

146. The **Secretariat's Finance Officer** confirmed that he would prepare a revised draft and requested that proposed amendments be submitted to him electronically.

147. A revised text was subsequently tabled by the **Finance Officer**.

148. The **USA** confirmed that its proposed amendments had been correctly reflected.

149. In the absence of further requests for the floor the **Chair** concluded that the DR had been approved by the Standing Committee.

Decision SC48-17: The Standing Committee approved forwarding DOC. SC48-20 Rev.1 Budget scenarios for 2016-2018 and Draft Resolution on financial and budgetary matters for the 2016-2018 triennium, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-30: *Call to action to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for the present and the future (submitted by Mexico)*

150. **Mexico** briefly introduced the DR.

151. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

152. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Argentina, Canada, Finland** (supported by **Cuba and Guatemala**), Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, USA

153. In response to a question from **Chile, Mexico** confirmed that it was in contact with the World Water Forum.

154. Responding to points made by **Canada** and the **USA**, the **STRP Chair** commented on the fit of the role requested of the STRP with the STRP's Thematic Areas and the Convention's Strategic Plan.

155. **Mexico** undertook to prepare a revised text for the meeting to consider for approval during Day 3, 30 January, and requested Parties with more substantial comments to submit these in writing.

Draft Resolution SC48-31: *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention (submitted by Denmark and supported by Finland)*

156. **Denmark** briefly introduced the DR.

157. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

158. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Islamic Republic of Iran, and USA.**

159. **Wetlands International** stressed that if the amendments proposed by **Brazil** and **Bolivia** were accepted, this would create a major inconsistency with work being carried out by many Contracting Parties, from the poles to the tropics. Peatlands represented roughly half of the world's wetlands and it would be hardly credible if the Convention did not recognise the role of peatlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

160. **Switzerland** supported the remarks of **Wetlands International**.

161. Responding to points made by **Canada** and the **USA**, the **STRP Chair** commented on what he considered to be good linkages with the STRP's Thematic Areas and the Convention's Strategic Plan.

162. **Denmark** committed to preparing a revised text of the DR taking into account as far as possible all of the interventions made. This would be submitted to the meeting for consideration during the morning of 30 January.

Draft Resolution SC48-28: *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction (submitted by the Philippines)*

163. **Philippines** made a short presentation introducing the DR.

164. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

165. **Guatemala** supported the existing text of the DR.

166. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Bolivia, Canada, Cuba, Finland, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Uruguay, UK** and **USA.**

167. **Wetlands International** explained why it was critically important to retain a reference to the role of humanitarian organizations, a point that had been proposed for deletion by some Parties. It was correct that humanitarian organizations had focused on relief, but they were increasingly engaging with the root causes of natural disasters, most of which were water related. Wetlands International offered to share its experience from working for five years with leading humanitarian organizations around the world.

168. **The Chair of the STRP** appreciated that Parties were concerned to avoid overburdening the STRP but identified complementarity with the Thematic Areas and Strategic Plan. He thanked **Wetlands International** for the offer of collaboration, which was entirely consistent with the way in which STRP tried to work.
169. In response to a question from the **Philippines, Indonesia** confirmed that, with some reluctance, it could accept use of the phrase “indigenous peoples and local communities” to be in line with terminology used widely in the UN system.
170. **The Philippines** undertook to prepare a revised text for SC48 to consider during the final day of its meeting and requested Parties with more substantial comments to submit these in writing.

Draft Resolution SC48-24: *Regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*

171. The **Senior Regional Adviser for Europe** briefly introduced the DR.
172. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.
173. Interventions were made by **Chile, Finland, Switzerland, UK and USA**.
174. The Secretariat’s **Senior Regional Adviser for Europe** explained that the portal concept had been conceived as a distinct area of the Ramsar web site, offering virtual support and information for Ramsar Regional Centres but also for other users. He outlined an estimated cost of CHF 20,000 – 30,000 to set it up.
175. The **Senior Regional Adviser for Europe** confirmed that he would submit an amended version for review early in the morning of 30 January.

SC48-21: *Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance*

176. The **Secretary General** introduced the document, and the draft report within it to be submitted to COP13 pursuant to Article 8.2. He noted the number of new Sites designated in the period under review, the notable number of outstanding updates, and the lack of swift resolution of Article 3.2 files. He noted that Contracting Parties would be invited to update information between COP12 and August 2015.
177. **China** reported difficulties with the new RSIS system, specifically in downloading a version of the RIS to be translated for local compilers.
178. The **Secretary General** expressed sympathy in this regard with users of languages other than English, French or Spanish, and gratitude for all the comments and issues reported. Solutions would be found within the limited available budget for ongoing system developments.
179. **Canada** noted a fall in the total number of Sites since the report had been compiled. The **Secretary General** explained that Sites had been recently merged, causing Site numbers to be retired.
180. **Japan, South Africa and Uruguay** made comments on the draft report of the Secretary General, or suggested corrections or updates to the annexes.

181. **Canada, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, South Africa and USA** proposed amendments to the text of the DR.

182. The **Secretary General** confirmed that an amended version would be distributed during the morning of 30 January.

Day 3 – Friday 30 January 2015

Agenda item 15: Review of COP12 Draft Resolutions (continued)

183. The **Chair** summarized the process for review and approval of the Draft Report of SC48.

184. The **Secretary General** advised the meeting that the Secretariat had received the following revised Draft Resolution texts, taking account of the amendments tabled during Day 2:

- SC48-21 Rev.1: *Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance*
- S48-22 Rev.1 *Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention and an Application for IOP Status*
- S48-24 Rev.1 *Regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*
- S48-27 Rev.1 *Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands*
- S48-29 Rev.1 *Ramsar Community Accreditation*
- S48-31 Rev.1 *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*

Copies of the revised texts were being distributed and were also available electronically. Participants would later receive SC48-28 Rev.1 *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction*, SC48-30 Rev.1 *Call to action to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for the present and the future* and the Draft Report of Day 2 of the meeting.

185. The **Chair** invited the meeting to turn to the three DR texts that had not yet been discussed by SC48.

Draft Resolution SC48-25: *Evaluating and ensuring the effective management and conservation of Ramsar Sites (submitted by Thailand)*

186. The DR was briefly introduced by **Thailand**.

187. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

188. Proposed amendments were tabled by **Brazil, Finland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, UK and USA**.

189. A debate, with participation from **Brazil, Chile, Denmark and Islamic Republic of Iran**, considered the merits of a reference to “climate change adaptation and mitigation” within an operative paragraph of the DR. **Brazil and Islamic Republic of Iran** expressed their strong desire to see this reference removed, but it was agreed the phrase would remain in the draft text, pending further negotiations at COP12.

190. With reference to the role foreseen for STRP, the **Chair of the STRP** commented that this was in line with the Priority Thematic Areas and Target 5 of the STRP Work Programme.

191. **Thailand** thanked participants for their contributions and undertook to revise the DR text, taking all proposals into account.

192. The **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-25 for forwarding to COP12, pending the incorporation by Thailand of amendments agreed during the meeting.

Decision SC48-18: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-25 *Evaluating and ensuring the effective management and conservation of Ramsar Sites, as amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.*

Draft Resolution SC48-26: *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention*

193. The DR was briefly introduced by **the Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisor for Europe**.

194. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

195. **Tunisia** observed that in line with the established thresholds there would be two representatives for Central and North Africa on the Standing Committee to be elected at COP12.

196. Following a proposal from **Chile**, supported by **Uruguay**, the meeting agreed that the DR should be amended to include renaming the Ramsar region "Neotropics" as "Latin America and the Caribbean" to bring regional nomenclature into line with that established within the UN system and other international fora.

197. Proposed minor amendments were tabled by the **USA**.

198. In response to a question from the **Islamic Republic of Iran**, the **Secretary General** confirmed that the current system of one regional representative for each 12 Contracting Parties had been established by previous COP decisions. Any change would require considerable discussion and a further COP decision.

199. The **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-26 for forwarding to COP12, pending the incorporation of the amendments agreed during the meeting.

Decision SC48-19: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-26 *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention, as amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.*

Draft Resolution SC48-23: *The Convention's Programme on communication, capacity development, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2016-2021*

200. This DR was briefly introduced by **the Secretariat's Head of Communications**, who tabled a number of amendments arising from discussion with Parties, notably France. These included

reverting to the Programme's original title (both within the DR itself and in Annex 1) for the sake of clarity.

201. The **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

202. Proposed amendments and/or other substantive comments were received from **Canada, Chile, Finland, Guatemala, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Latvia, South Africa, Switzerland, and USA**, as well as from **ICLEI** and **WWF**.

203. The **Secretary General** confirmed that a draft CEPA Workplan would be prepared within two weeks by the Head of Communications, in consultation with the CEPA Oversight Panel and other CEPA-involved Parties. He clarified that the phrase "capacity development" (rather than "capacity building") had been used in the DR to reflect established usage within the UN system and elsewhere.

204. The **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-23 for forwarding to COP12, pending the incorporation of the amendments agreed during the meeting.

Decision SC48-20: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-23 *The Convention's Programme on communication, capacity development, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2016-2021, as amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.*

Draft Resolution SC48-27 Rev.1 *Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands* (submitted by Greece)

205. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-27 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.

206. The **MedWet Secretariat** supported the revised text and thanked Parties that had tabled amendments.

207. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-27 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12.

Decision SC48-21: The Standing Committee approved forwarding, without further amendment, Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-27 Rev.1 *Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands* for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-29 Rev.1: *Ramsar City Accreditation* (submitted by Tunisia / Republic of Korea)

208. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-29 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing, following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.

209. Suggested amendments and/or other substantive comments were received from **Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Japan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea, Oman, South Africa, Switzerland, UAE, Uruguay** and **USA**, as well as from the **Chair of the STRP, ICLEI** and the **MedWet Secretariat**. These related mainly to the name of the proposed accreditation and therefore the title of the DR itself.

210. **Tunisia** (as the Party that had submitted this DR) responded to a number of the points made.

211. Following extensive discussion, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-29 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to amending the title to “Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation”, corresponding renaming of the proposed accreditation throughout the document, and minor amendments to accommodate points made by the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and the **Chair of the STRP**. It was also agreed that communications expertise should be sought ahead of COP12.

Decision SC48-22: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-29 Rev.1 Ramsar City Accreditation, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-31 Rev.1: *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention (submitted by Denmark and supported by Finland)*

212. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-31 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing, following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.

213. **Denmark** introduced the amended text.

214. Amendments to ensure clarity of meaning were tabled by **South Africa** and **USA**.

215. In response to a question from **Oman**, The **Secretary General** explained that peatlands constituted a specific category of wetland that were of particular significance for storing large quantities of CO₂.

216. **Brazil** thanked Denmark for attempting to accommodate its proposals. Nevertheless, Brazil wished to place on record a reservation reiterating its position that it was inappropriate to discuss issues related to climate mitigation under the Ramsar Convention, given that the UNFCCC was mandated in such matters. However, it was not Brazil’s intention to impede discussion at SC48 and Brazil was content that negotiation should continue at COP12.

217. The **Islamic Republic of Iran** placed on record its strong objection to inclusion of any reference to climate change adaptation and mitigation in the DR, recalling that negotiations on this matter were ongoing in the framework of the UNFCCC and that it would be inappropriate to prejudge the outcome of these negotiations.

218. **Chile** and **Cuba** supported removal of references to climate change mitigation, also citing the mandate of UNFCCC in this matter.

219. **Denmark, Finland** and **Switzerland** supported the text of SC48-31 Rev.1 as tabled, with **Denmark** putting forward the strong view that further negotiations, on what was a topic requiring in-depth legal advice and consultation with national capitals, should take place at COP12.

220. **Chile** observed that it would be very important for each Contracting Party delegate to COP12 to be fully aware of the position of their government in relation to the issues raised by this DR.

221. A lengthy and intensive debate ensued, focusing on the wording of the first operative paragraph of the DR (paragraph number 16 in SC48-31 Rev.1).
222. There being no consensus view, the **Chair** convened a closed session of the Standing Committee, in order for voting members to determine a way forward.
223. In response to a request from the **USA** the **Chair** ruled that Contracting Party observers would be permitted to attend the closed session.
224. Following a short discussion in closed session **Cuba** proposed insertion of a new paragraph (16 bis) as follows: "Reaffirms the mandate of UNFCCC and IPCC in climate change;"
225. **Denmark** and **Islamic Republic of Iran** indicated their acceptance of this amendment.
226. The **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-31 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the new paragraph tabled by Cuba, and noting the reservations of Brazil and Islamic Republic of Iran.

Decision SC48-23: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-31 Rev.1 *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12, while noting the reservations of Brazil and Islamic Republic of Iran.

SC48-21 Rev.1: *Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance*

227. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-21 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing, following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.
228. **Canada**, supported by **Chile**, **Colombia**, **Indonesia** and **USA**, requested the reinstatement of preambular paragraph number 4 that had been deleted in SC48-21 Rev.1.
229. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-21 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the amendment tabled by Canada.

Decision SC48-24: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-21 Rev.1 *Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-24 Rev.1: *Regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*

230. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-24 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing, following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.
231. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-24 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12.

Decision SC48-25: The Standing Committee approved forwarding, without further amendment, Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-24 Rev.1 *Regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention* for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-22 Rev.1: *Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention and an Application for IOP Status*

232. The **Chair** referred participants to SC48-22 Rev.1, which took account of proposed amendments that had been submitted in writing, following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.

233. Proposed further amendments were tabled by **Canada, South Africa, Switzerland, USA** and **WWF**.

234. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-22 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the additional amendments tabled.

Decision SC48-26: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-22 Rev.1 *Resource Mobilization and Partnership Framework of the Ramsar Convention and an Application for IOP Status*, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-30 Rev. 1: *Call to action to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for the present and the future (submitted by Mexico)*

235. **Mexico** introduced the revised text, which took account of amendments submitted in writing following discussion of the original text during Day 2 of the meeting.

236. **Canada**, supported by **Chile** and **Finland** proposed a minor amendment to help make references to STRP tasks consistent across all DRs.

237. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-30 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the amendment tabled by Canada.

Decision SC48-27: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-30 Rev.1 *Call to action to ensure and protect the water requirements of wetlands for the present and the future*, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Draft Resolution SC48-28 Rev.1: *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction (submitted by the Philippines)*

238. The **Chair** drew attention to SC48-28 Rev.1, in which the **Philippines** had taken into account written amendments received after discussion during Day 2 of the meeting. She opened the floor to comments.

239. **Canada** proposed a minor amendment to help make references to STRP tasks consistent across all DRs.

240. The **Islamic Republic of Iran** raised a concern that the amended text retained a reference to “humanitarian organizations”, whereas Iran had previously requested removal of the phrase. In Iran’s view there was no relation between humanitarian organizations and wetlands.
241. **The Philippines** indicated that it had deleted “humanitarian organizations” in one paragraph as requested in the written amendment received from Iran, but had not received any proposal for deletion elsewhere.
242. **The Philippines** and **Tunisia** highlighted circumstances where humanitarian organizations could play an important role in helping to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands as a means for reducing disaster risk.
243. Following a protracted debate with interventions from **Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Islamic Republic of Iran, the Philippines, Tunisia, UK, and USA**, consensus was reached to amend paragraph 30 of SC48-28 Rev.1 to read: “ENCOURAGES collaboration between national disaster management agencies and river basin authorities, coastal managers and national and, as appropriate, international humanitarian organizations, to develop and implement laws, policies and plans, including contingency plans, to integrate ecosystem-based approaches, including infrastructure with low levels of pollution, in disaster risk reduction, as appropriate, in accordance with national laws and regulations.”
244. There being no further comments, the **Chair** concluded that the Standing Committee had approved the text of Draft Resolution SC48-28 Rev.1 for forwarding to COP12, subject to inclusion of the amendment tabled by Canada in relation to STRP tasks, and to the amendment made to paragraph 30.

Decision SC48-28: The Standing Committee approved the forwarding of Draft Resolution DOC. SC48-28 Rev.1 *Wetlands and disaster risk reduction*, as further amended by SC48, for consideration at COP12.

Agenda item 16: Other matters

Date and venue of the 49th meeting of the Standing Committee:

245. These were confirmed as Monday 1 June 2015 (10:00 – 13:00), in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

Approval of Reports of Days 1 & 2

246. The **Chair** invited participants to review the Draft Reports of Days 1 & 2 of the meeting. She asked that corrections of an editorial nature be communicated directly to the Secretariat, while more substantive proposed amendments should be raised in plenary.
247. A correction to paragraph 83 of the Report of Day 2 was requested by **Denmark**. A suggested amendment to the wording of decision SC48-12 was not supported by the Chair of the Finance Subgroup.
248. The **Chair** concluded that the Draft Reports of Days 1 & 2 of SC48 had been approved subject to inclusion of the correction tabled by Denmark.
249. The **Chair** read the summary report of the closed session of the Management Working Group held on 26 January 2015.

Decision SC48-29: The Standing Committee approved the Reports of Days 1 & 2 of SC48 (subject to inclusion of a correction tabled by Denmark), and requested the Chair to review and approve the Draft Report of Day 3 prior to the circulation of the full report to Parties. The Standing Committee also noted the report of the closed session of the Management Working Group (26 January 2015).

Any other business

250. The **Secretary General** reminded participants that SC48 had been informed the previous day by the UAE delegation that full Cabinet approval had been received for hosting COP13 in Dubai. The Minister of Environment & Water had conveyed a letter of confirmation to the Secretariat and a reply had already been sent. The Secretariat was now awaiting a formal invitation signed by the Head of State or Minister of Foreign Affairs.

251. **Guinea** suggested that a letter be sent from the Standing Committee to the Head of State or Head of Government for Contracting Parties in Africa that had outstanding contributions. Such a letter could be an effective strategy to complement efforts already made by the Secretariat and by the Parties themselves.

Closing remarks

252. Words of thanks and other closing remarks came from **Chile, Islamic Republic of Iran, UAE**, and the **Secretary General**.

253. Adding her own thanks to Parties, observers, the Secretariat, the interpreters and to IUCN, the **Chair** declared SC48 closed.