

Report and Decisions of the 62nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Tuesday 5 September 2023

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. Opening statements were made by:
 - Dr XIA Jun, Chair of the Standing Committee;
 - Dr Grethel AGUILAR, Acting Director General, IUCN;
 - Ms Nina MIKANDER, Director of Global Policy, BirdLife International, on behalf of the six International Organization Partners (IOPs); and
 - Dr Musonda MUMBA, Secretary General of the Convention.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

2. The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced the provisional agenda in document SC62 Doc.2 Rev.1.

Decision SC62-01: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional agenda in document SC62 Doc.2 Rev.1.

Agenda item 3: Adoption of the provisional working programme

3. The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced the provisional working programme in document SC62 Doc.3.

Decision SC62-02: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional working programme in document SC62 Doc.3.

Agenda item 4: Admission of observers

4. The Secretariat outlined the key paragraphs of document SC62 Doc.4. Observer bodies listed for admission as observers included:

United Nations and its specialized agencies:

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

States not party to the Convention:

- Qatar - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

Bodies and agencies qualified in fields relating to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands:

- International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation
- ONG APES
- Programme de Développement Humainitaire et Logistique (P.D.H.L.)

Decision SC62-03: The Standing Committee admitted the observers listed in document SC62 Doc.4.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Executive Team and Chair of the Standing Committee

5. The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced document SC62 Doc. 5.

Decision SC62-04: The Standing Committee took note the Report of the Executive Team and Chair of the Standing Committee published as document SC62 Doc.5.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Secretary General

6. The Secretary General presented her report contained in document SC62 Doc. 6.
7. Standing Committee members congratulated the Secretary General on her work in increasing the visibility of wetlands in global processes, strengthening collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other global targets, and mobilizing resources to support implementation of the Convention.
8. Interventions were made by Australia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and Youth Engaged in Wetlands.

Decision SC62-05: The Standing Committee welcomed the Report of the Secretary General published as document SC62 Doc.6.

Agenda item 7: Report of the Management Working Group

9. The Chair of the Standing Committee and of the Management Working Group presented the report on the Management Working Group's meeting, which took place on Monday, 4 September 2023.

Decision SC62-06: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Management Working Group.

Agenda item 20: Preparation of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15)

10. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.20.1, *Report of the Secretariat on COP15*, highlighting Zimbabwe's offer to host COP15, presenting the meeting's provisional agenda, and the dates of 23-31 July 2025 proposed by the host country.
11. A Standing Committee member suggested including the Wetland City Accreditation awards in the provisional agenda.

12. Zimbabwe presented on the status of preparedness towards COP15.
13. Standing Committee members expressed their appreciation to Zimbabwe for hosting and to the Secretariat for its work in preparing for COP15.
14. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Contracting Parties to express their interest in joining the Subgroup on COP15.
15. Canada, China, Madagascar, Saint Lucia, Sweden (with Slovenia as alternate), Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu (with Australia as alternate) and BirdLife international expressed their interest in joining the Subgroup on COP15.
16. Interventions were made by Botswana, Republic of Korea and Sweden.

Decision SC62-07: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretariat on COP15.

Decision SC62-08: The Standing Committee accepted the proposed dates 23-31 July 2025 for COP15.

Decision SC62-09: The Standing Committee approved the provisional agenda for COP15 with the addition of Wetland City Accreditation as an agenda item.

Decision SC62-10: The Standing Committee approved the composition of the Subgroup on COP15.

Agenda item 10: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group
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17. Brazil and Canada, Co-Chairs of the Strategic Plan Working Group, presented document SC62 Doc.10.
18. Standing Committee members thanked the Co-Chairs and the team of consultants for their work.
19. Interventions were made by Australia, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the STRP Chair.

Decision SC62-11: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group.

15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 25: Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives
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20. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.25 Rev.1, focusing initially on the submission of annual reports from the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), and on newly established RRIs that are eligible for core budget support. It noted the suggested allocation of funds from the 2023 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” to provide start-up funding to the Southern African RRI.

21. Saint Lucia offered additional updates on the activities of the regional project funded by IKI of the Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet).

Decision SC62-12: The Standing Committee took note of the annual reports submitted by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) for 2022 in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*.

Decision SC62-13: The Standing Committee noted the allocation of funds from the 2023 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” proposed in document SC62 Doc.8.1, to provide start-up funding of CHF 30,000 to the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative.

22. The Secretariat introduced the proposal for a new RRI within the framework of the Convention, the International Mangrove Centre (IMC), which had been developed in accordance with Resolution XIV.19 *Proposal to establish an International Mangrove Centre (a Ramsar Regional Initiative)*, and reported on the call for proposals for new RRIs, which it had made in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, with a deadline for responses of 30 September 2023.
23. China, as a proponent of the IMC alongside Cambodia and Madagascar, provided additional information on the proposal, including through a presentation and a video, noting the importance of mangroves and describing national efforts towards mangrove conservation. It outlined the vision, principles, mission, and objectives of the IMC, as well as the proposed governance structure and the initial financing plan which include the proposed International Mangrove Futures Fund. China noted that the Initiative would not seek funding from the Convention’s core budget. To date, letters of support had been received from 13 Contracting Parties. Panama noted that it had contributed to the formulation of operating documents, and had submitted a letter of support to the Secretary General in addition to those Parties listed in the proposal.
24. Eleven Standing Committee members and nine other Contracting Parties present congratulated the proponents of the IMC for their efforts and supported the establishment of the IMC as a new RRI, stressing that, among other things, it will assist in strengthening international cooperation.
25. Some Standing Committee members suggested amendments to the documents submitted, including the terms of reference for the IMC, focusing on: strengthening existing regional initiatives on mangroves and avoiding duplication of efforts; simplifying and streamlining the proposed governance structure; the rationale and scope for a reference to “pantropical” regional coverage; the voluntary character of contributions for financing the IMC as well as the importance of attracting private funding; potential collaboration between the IMC and States not party to the Convention; and other initiatives to collaborate with the IMC, including the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, and efforts under the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).
26. The Secretariat clarified that States not party to the Convention have been participating in established RRIs.
27. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted the widespread support for the proposal and invited informal consultations among interested Standing Committee members on suggested amendments.

28. Following informal consultations, China reported back on the consultations, in particular on the description of the proposed region as well as IMC's objectives, governance and financing. It noted that a revised document would be published for consideration by the Standing Committee. The Chair confirmed that the Standing Committee would revisit the item on Wednesday, 6 September.
29. Interventions were made by Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechia, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Libya on behalf of the North African Parties, Madagascar, Panama, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Zimbabwe and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

Agenda item 13: Work plan of the Secretariat for 2023-2025
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30. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.13.
31. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) noted that two tasks in the work plan closely relate to STRP tasks, namely the collation of case studies on small wetlands and the provision of guidance to Contracting Parties related to national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and suggested the addition of the phrase "in association with the STRP" under these tasks.

Decision SC62-14: The Standing Committee took note of and approved the Secretariat's integrated Annual Plan for 2023 and Triennial Plan for 2023-2025, subject to the additions proposed by the STRP Chair.

Wednesday 6 September 2023

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 11: Secretariat report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention

32. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.11, outlining the consultation process carried out in response to paragraph 22 of Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*. Interested Contracting Parties participating in the second meeting under that process had agreed on the prioritization of opportunities to strengthen the Secretariat through: administrative arrangements; governance; leadership; human resources independency; and high-level political engagement and the Convention's visibility objectives, as shown in Annex 2 of the document. Those Contracting Parties had also proposed recommendations for consideration, which are listed in paragraph 10 of the same document, but held different views on how this work should be progressed, particularly regarding the hosting of the Secretariat.
33. A Standing Committee member highlighted the outcomes of the consultation process, thanking all participants for their openness, constructive spirit, and commitment to finding common ground.

34. A Standing Committee member proposed a clarification to paragraph 10 and Annex 2 of the document, to the effect that the Contracting Parties at the meeting had put forward a variety of options for consideration.
35. Some Standing Committee members noted that few Contracting Parties had participated in the consultation process, with a few members further noting that some of the questions included in the relevant document will require input from IUCN. Other Standing Committee members suggested further work addressing potential implications of the draft recommendations prior to their inclusion in a possible draft resolution for consideration by the Parties at COP15.
36. Some Contracting Parties and Standing Committee members supported the transition to the UN system. Others were of the opinion that it is preferable to investigate a restricted number of measures that can be taken that does not include a transition. A number of Standing Committee members supported the establishment of a Working Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention, bearing in mind all potential pathways and addressing budgetary implications.
37. Some Standing Committee members emphasized the need for terms of reference for the Working Group. One member cautioned that these should avoid overburdening the Management Working Group and Subgroup on Finance in the process.
38. Standing Committee members agreed that the Working Group, following its establishment, would draft terms of reference to be presented to the Standing Committee for its consideration and approval by Friday, 8 September 2023.
39. Regarding the request to the Management Working Group to prepare a draft resolution that establishes the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, to respond to Decision SC59-40 and for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting (SC63), some Standing Committee members underscored the value of ensuring that all Contracting Parties have a good understanding of the process.
40. Australia, Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Morocco, Panama, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States of America, and Zimbabwe expressed interest in participating in the Working Group.
41. Interventions were made by Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and IUCN.

Decision SC62-15: The Standing Committee took note of the Secretariat's report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention in response to Resolution XIV.6, paragraph 22.

Decision SC62-16: The Standing Committee took note of the recommendations of the interested Contracting Parties and the Secretariat reflected in Annex 2 of the report.

Decision SC62-17: The Standing Committee established a Working Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention, including through the preparation of a draft resolution for the consideration of the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Secretariat on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention

42. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.12, addressing, among other things, the instruction to the Secretariat to propose approaches to enhance collaboration between Contracting Parties through online tools. It highlighted the two options for approaches suggested in the document, with the first leveraging widely used collaboration tools such as SharePoint, and the second proposing a more bespoke secure integrated platform.
43. Many Standing Committee members supported the first approach. A few suggested using a pilot implementation project in a specific Working Group for assessment, while others suggested that the new work method should be implemented as soon as possible and for all the ongoing intersessional work of the Convention. Some representatives were open to potentially considering a more tailored platform in the long term.
44. Some Standing Committee members emphasized that the selected systems should not replace in-person negotiations and should reflect the needs of Parties with less capacity for online engagement; while others noted that such online tools could be a complementary resource, and improve access for remote participants in negotiations. It was noted that their application should feature tracking of versions of documents being drafted for Contracting Parties' reference, to ensure transparency, and that ongoing implementation of online tools should take into account the challenges experienced by Contracting Parties.
45. A Standing Committee member suggested caution in entering arrangements on the use of more bespoke systems, noting the risk of ongoing budgetary implications. Another mentioned that if there is a decision to have such a system it can be in cooperation with other Conventions and costs might be shared.
46. Interventions were made by Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Decision SC62-18: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to follow approach 1 as defined in document SC62 Doc.12, using existing tools in preparing a plan to be presented to the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee, recognizing that the implementation of those tools should not replace in-person negotiations, and noting that further discussions to refine the process will be held.

Agenda item 14: Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies in partnership with multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

47. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.14.
48. Standing Committee members thanked the Secretariat for its work to enhance the Convention's visibility and impact.
49. Burkina Faso read a statement by Gabon introducing the Freshwater Challenge and inviting the Standing Committee to express its support. The Freshwater Challenge was launched by several Parties to the Convention at the UN Water Conference in March 2023, with the aims of including quantitative wetland objectives in wider frameworks and processes and mobilizing the resources to protect wetlands. The Chair of the 2023 UN Climate Conference

has selected the Challenge to be one of the outcomes of the Water Programme to be launched at the meeting. Parties were encouraged to join the initiative and work together on related Resolutions for COP15. Many Standing Committee members expressed support for the Freshwater Challenge, inviting Contracting Parties that have not done so to join, and suggesting that the Convention engage further with the initiative. One Standing Committee member noted that not all Contracting Parties are supporters of this initiative.

50. Other Standing Committee members and organizations highlighted opportunities for further developing synergies with: the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention); the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), highlighting its Amazon Summit in August 2023 and the resulting declaration; the Raptors Memorandum of Understanding under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on work on blue carbon ecosystems; the Convention on Biological Diversity under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), further highlighting the World Coastal Forum; the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA); and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The STRP Chair highlighted the tasks of the panel with the IPCC. Youth Engaged in Wetlands highlighted the opportunity to engage with wider civil society.
51. One Standing Committee member noted that it can be difficult to access support and engagement of the Convention's IOPs.
52. Interventions were made by Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso on behalf of Gabon, Burkina Faso on behalf of Parties in Western Africa, Canada on behalf of Mexico, China, Costa Rica, Finland, Georgia, Slovakia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Zimbabwe, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and Youth Engaged in Wetlands.

Decision SC62-19: The Standing Committee took note of the progress in implementing Resolutions XIV.6 and XIII.7 on enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions.

Agenda item 15: Review and consolidation of current Resolutions

53. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.15, noting three items for consideration of the Standing Committee: to note the action taken by the Secretariat thus far; to select subject categories of Resolutions for which draft consolidations will be prepared for consideration at SC63, and agree to the allocation of surplus funds to support that process; and to agree to the three-step process proposed for maintaining the list of Decisions of the Standing Committee.
54. It invited Standing Committee members to select two subject categories of Resolutions for which draft consolidations will be prepared for consideration at SC63, from the list at paragraph 16 of the document, and proposed the additional category of "Inventories" for which a draft had already been presented in document SC59 Doc.13.3.
55. Standing Committee members agreed with selecting "Inventories" and "CEPA" as a second category. They expressed divergent positions on whether "Water, water-related, and water-management-related", "Assessment of wetland values and services" or "Climate change" should be selected as a third category. Some members suggested conducting consolidations

for both water-related issues and wetland values and services. Another member cautioned against prioritizing one topic or another, noting different opinions among members.

56. A Standing Committee member suggested that the Subgroup on Finance address the budgetary implications of conducting an additional consolidation. The Chair asked the Subgroup on Finance to meet briefly during the break and report back to the Committee in the afternoon session.
57. Regarding the process for maintaining the list of Standing Committee Decisions, some Committee members suggested further considering the cut-off date regarding inclusion of older Decisions of the Standing Committee in the list. Standing Committee members expressed a preference for SC24 to be the starting point.
58. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Madagascar, Panama, Rwanda, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.

Decision SC62-20: The Standing Committee took note of the action taken by the Secretariat as reported in document SC62 Doc.15.

Decision SC62-21: The Standing Committee agreed to the three-step process outlined in paragraph 23 of document SC62 Doc.15 for maintaining the list of current Decisions of the Standing Committee, with the proviso that older Decisions which are excluded from the list do not become defunct, but remain accessible on the Convention website and can be included in the list if they are identified as still current.

15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 25: Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (continued)
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59. The Chair opened the session and invited an update on the contact group established the previous day to refine the proposal for a new Ramsar Regional Initiative, the International Mangrove Centre (IMC).
60. China, as one of the proponents of the IMC, reported that the contact group had received inputs from five Contracting Parties; they had been incorporated in document SC62 Doc.25 Rev.2, which had been published earlier in the day, showing amendments to the draft terms of reference of the IMC for the consideration of the Standing Committee. The Parties had expressed satisfaction with the amendments made.
61. Standing Committee members and an observer acknowledged the efforts and flexibility of China, and looked forward to the establishment of the IMC and the expected fruitful cooperation between the Parties concerned and with other mangrove-related initiatives.
62. Interventions were made by Brazil, China, Costa Rica and Wetlands International, also on behalf of IUCN and WWF.

Decision SC62-22: The Standing Committee endorsed the International Mangrove Centre as a new Ramsar Regional Initiative within the framework of the Convention, with the terms of reference in Attachment 1 to Annex 2 of document SC62 Doc.25 Rev.2.

Decision SC62-23: The Standing Committee took note that a call for proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives had been made in accordance with Resolution XIV.7, with a deadline for responses of 30 September 2023; and that the Secretariat will report the result of the call to the Standing committee at its 63rd meeting.

Agenda item 15: Review and consolidation of current Resolutions (continued)

63. Following a brief meeting of the Subgroup on Finance, the Chair of the Subgroup reported consensus on recommending an additional allocation of CHF 11,000 to enable an increase to four of the total number of subject categories covered by the consolidation exercise.

Decision SC62-24: The Standing Committee agreed to the allocation of CHF 33,000 of surplus funds for consultancies to support the process of consolidation and revision of Resolutions.

Decision SC62-25: The Standing Committee selected “Inventories”, “CEPA”, “Water, water-related, and water-management-related” and “Assessment of wetland values and services” as categories for which draft consolidations will be prepared for consideration at SC63.

Agenda item 16.1: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel

64. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, as Vice-Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel, presented document SC62 Doc.16.1, outlining the composition of the new Panel and the work completed to date, including the preparation and initial implementation of the Panel’s work plan for the triennium.

Decision SC62-26: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the CEPA Oversight Panel presented in document SC62 Doc.16.1.

Agenda item 16.2: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): CEPA Oversight Panel work plan, 2023-2025

65. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, as Vice-Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel, presented document SC62 Doc.16.2, outlining the Panel’s work plan for the triennium and highlighting tasks involving: enhancing support to CEPA National Focal Points; reviewing CEPA guidance; engaging with the STRP to optimize the reach of its products including the next edition of the Global Wetland Outlook; engaging in the preparation of the Fifth Strategic Plan; engaging with the Wetland Cities Accreditation; and engaging in youth-related activities.

66. The STRP Chair expressed satisfaction with the ongoing collaboration.

Decision SC62-27: The Standing Committee took note of the work plan for 2023-2025 of the CEPA Oversight Panel presented in document SC62 Doc.16.2.

Agenda item 16.3: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Report of the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day

67. The Secretariat provided a presentation on World Wetlands Day.

68. Several Standing Committee members thanked the Secretariat for the presentation and the support provided to countries, and shared information on national initiatives and actions in celebration of World Wetlands Day 2023. Two members highlighted the support of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) in translating World Wetlands Day materials into Arabic.
69. A Standing Committee member suggested that a written report to the Standing Committee on World Wetland Day outcomes, best practices and lessons to be learned would be useful. Another suggested identifying potential challenges and proposing recommendations, further noting that lessons can be drawn from other similar initiatives.
70. A Standing Committee member suggested using celebrities to appeal to additional audiences and further extend the message of the importance of wetland protection. Another underlined the importance of materials which can be adapted to local needs.
71. Interventions were made by Cambodia, China, Czechia, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya, Rwanda and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.
72. The Chair drew the attention of the participants to the upcoming World Wetlands Day 2024, with the theme “Wetlands and human wellbeing”.

Decision SC62-28: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day 2023.

Agenda item 17: Report of the Youth Working Group

73. Australia, as Chair of the Youth Working Group (YWG), presented document SC62 Doc.17, highlighting the three meetings that the YWG had held, to organize and conduct youth consultation workshops, appoint liaison roles to the STRP and the Strategic Plan Working Group, and to launch the YWG work plan.
74. Standing Committee members expressed appreciation for the Group’s work, welcoming efforts to appoint national youth focal points and foster youth participation in international environmental processes, and proposing the involvement of local community members as mentors.
75. Interventions were made by Australia, Canada, Colombia, Japan, Slovakia and Youth Engaged in Wetlands.

Decision SC62-29: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the Youth Working Group as presented in document SC62 Doc.17.

Agenda item 18: Resource Mobilization Work Plan 2023-2025

76. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.18, which included the list of non-core fundraising priorities for 2023-2025 and the activities to facilitate resource mobilization of Contracting Parties. It acknowledged the Contracting Parties that had made voluntary contributions in the triennium thus far.
77. A Standing Committee member noted that Parties have varying capacities to mobilize resources to implement the Convention, for example through updating data on Wetlands of

International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”), and underlined that the Fifth Strategic Plan offers an opportunity to support efforts by highlighting the importance of wetlands to the implementation of other Conventions’ processes. The member welcomed the focus on resource mobilization of the Secretary General.

78. A Standing Committee member queried the process for the needs assessment survey, and suggested that the survey’s results be shared with Parties. The Secretariat provided the necessary clarifications.
79. Interventions were made by Burkina Faso and Japan.

Decision SC62-30: The Standing Committee approved the Resource Mobilization Work Plan for 2023-2025 as presented in document SC62 Doc.18.

Thursday 7 September 2023

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 11: Secretariat report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention

80. The United States of America, as interim Chair of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening , reported back to plenary on its deliberations, highlighting good progress and noting that additional discussions would be needed to finalize the terms of reference of the established Working Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention. He added that the terms of reference were expected to be tabled for consideration by plenary on Friday, 8 September 2023.

Agenda item 8: Financial and budgetary matters

81. The United States of America, as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, reported that consensus had been reached on much, if not all, of the decision text, noting additional edits on the report (document SC62 Com.1 Rev.1) and requesting a brief meeting of the Subgroup to finalize the text.

Agenda item 19: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, including work plan for 2023-2025

82. The STRP Chair presented document SC62 Doc.19 Rev.1, focusing on: STRP aims for 2023-2025; progress with implementation of priority STRP tasks; STRP outputs to be reported at SC63 and SC64; and recommendations from the 25th meeting of the STRP (STRP25). The STRP Chair thanked Standing Committee members for approving the STRP work plan intersessionally on 29 June 2023 as this had allowed the STRP to begin work on the priority tasks.
83. Standing Committee members expressed appreciation for the STRP’s work.
84. Some Standing Committee members offered suggestions regarding the implementation of tasks in the STRP work plan, including on: rapid assessment to identify threats that ecosystems face, including measures related to climate adaptation and risk mitigation; the

importance of information provided by local communities on small wetlands; actions focusing on maintaining and restoring wetlands in agricultural settings and consideration of impacts of the agricultural sector on wetlands; the potential of wetlands, including constructed wetlands, as blue infrastructure to better face climate-related disasters; policies and subsidies that have a negative impact on wetlands; work on relevant GBF indicators; research on inland wetland greenhouse gas absorption and emission; the importance of considering different regional and national circumstances in the global assessment of gaps in the Ramsar Site network; the need for a balanced approach towards mitigation and adaptation to address the impacts of climate change on wetlands and enhance the resilience of wetlands and wetlands-dependent communities; exploring innovative sustainable approaches, including the provision of a wide range of biodiversity-based products and services that can generate co-benefits for food security through bioeconomy value chains; and ensuring coordination between the task groups, and across different tasks and thematic working areas on cross-cutting topics.

85. On potential future priorities that the STRP may consider, Standing Committee members suggested: guidance on the interpretation of the wetland definition as provided by the Convention, including ecosystem classification; and improving the understanding of the social, economic and environmental benefits of wetlands and, in a balanced and integrated manner, assessing the social and economic vulnerability of wetlands-dependent communities and identifying pathways to support sustainable livelihoods.
86. The STRP Chair expressed appreciation for all comments by Standing Committee members. He stressed that the comments fall under two categories: finalization of terms of reference for current projects; and emerging issues for the STRP work plan for the following triennium. He emphasized that all suggestions provide value and highlighted the need to stay within the scope of the work plan already approved intersessionally by the Standing Committee. He further suggested that the STRP identify emerging challenges to present to the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting.
87. Interventions were made by Australia, Belgium on behalf of the European Region, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Republic of Korea, and Sweden.

Decision SC62-31: The Standing Committee noted the report of the STRP Chair.

Decision SC62-32: The Standing Committee noted the intersessionally approved STRP 2023-2025 workplan contained in Annex 1 of document SC62 Doc.19 Rev.1.

Agenda item 21: National Report for COP15

88. The Secretariat introduced document SC62 Doc.21, noting that the National Report form is divided into four sections, retaining the structure and content of previous forms to ensure consistency and continuity. It highlighted that the voluntary fifth section of previous Reports enabling Parties to provide additional information on Ramsar Sites had been removed to avoid unnecessary reporting burden to Contracting Parties, with the data already available in the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), and that questions on youth engagement were added, including on national youth focal points. He further noted the mapping of questions to the goals and targets of the Fourth Strategic Plan and to COP14 Resolutions.
89. Standing Committee members discussed ways to simplify questions to reduce reporting burden for Contracting Parties, and considered the revision, removal or addition of questions

on: gender balance; national wetland inventories to also address main needs in the preparation and updating of such inventories; policies to encourage the private sector to apply the wise use principle and guidance to also address guidelines or other instruments; the implementation of actions that contribute to capacity building for implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan; major lessons learned in the context of wetlands and gender equality; efforts to conserve and wisely use urban and peri-urban wetlands; and links with other relevant Conventions.

90. A Standing Committee member suggested adding a question on the reasons for arrears in Contracting Parties' financial contributions, with other Standing Committee members suggesting caution in the spirit of cooperation and solidarity.
91. The Standing Committee Chair suggested, and delegates agreed, establishing a contact group for interested Parties to meet and further discuss additions and amendments in order to finalize the document by the end of the day.
92. Interventions were made by Algeria, Brazil, Brazil on behalf of Ecuador, Canada, Costa Rica, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Zimbabwe and Youth Engaged in Wetlands.

Agenda item 9: Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention: Update on wetlands inventories

93. The Secretariat introduced document SC62 Doc.9, focusing on: background information; progress in completing national wetland inventories; and the work of the Secretariat to support national wetland inventories, including relevant recommendations.
94. Standing Committee members underscored the importance of national wetland inventories to prevent wetland degradation and loss, and supported the structured approach towards wetland inventory support described in paragraph 15 of document SC62 Doc.9.
95. Some Standing Committee members called for increased regional support towards establishing national wetland inventories, including capacity-building activities, establishing partnerships for data use, a roadmap for progress, and financial resources. They further stressed that work on inventories should be a continuous activity and called for: the development of guidelines on capacity building regarding the use of new technologies; development of regional case studies on positive experiences; enhancement of existing regional inventories; and establishment of a work plan for supporting Contracting Parties' activities.
96. The members representing the Africa region, noting the absence of a formal mechanism to assist Parties in facilitating the implementation of the Convention, invited a more systematic approach to resource mobilization and requested that the Secretariat organize a consultative meeting with Africa and other interested regions to assess resource mobilization needs with a view to possibly developing a draft resolution.
97. Other Standing Committee members offered to share national experiences and lessons learned from the preparation of wetland inventories; and encouraged considering national inventories in other fora, including for ensuring consistent use of wetland typology.

98. The Secretariat noted that the structured approach towards wetland inventory support in paragraph 15 of document SC62 Doc.9 will be amended according to Standing Committee members' suggestions.
99. Interventions were made by Algeria, Australia, China, Madagascar for the African Region, Republic of Korea, and Rwanda.

Decision SC62-33: The Standing Committee noted the progress of Contracting Parties in completing national wetland inventories and the lessons learned.

Decision SC62-34: The Standing Committee noted the next steps in the support provided by the Secretariat to Contracting Parties on the completion of national wetland inventories, taking into account the amendments proposed.

15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 11: Secretariat report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention

100. South Africa, as Chair of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening, reported back to plenary on its deliberations, noting that it was close to finalizing work on the terms of reference of the Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention. Following editorial amendments, the draft terms of reference would be available for consideration by the Standing Committee on Friday, 8 September 2023.

Agenda item 8.2: Financial and budgetary matters – Report of the Subgroup on Finance: Status of annual contributions

101. The United States of America, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, presented the sections of document SC62 Com.1 Rev.2 *Report of the Subgroup on Finance* covering the status of annual contributions, highlighting relevant discussions in the Subgroup and the Subgroup's recommendations to the Standing Committee.
102. Two Standing Committee members suggested addressing arrears in national contributions, noting that the need to maintain a provision in the budget hinders progress in the implementation of the Convention, and proposing that the Subgroup on Finance or a new working group might be mandated to develop a draft resolution on the issue for consideration by COP15.
103. Other Standing Committee members noted various reasons for the existence of arrears, including administrative issues and sanctions, and cautioned against punitive actions that may discourage engagement with the Convention.
104. The Standing Committee Chair suggested, and delegates agreed, that the discussion be reflected in the meeting's report.
105. Interventions were made by Brazil, Colombia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Samoa, Sweden, Switzerland and Zimbabwe.

Decision SC62-35: The Standing Committee took note of the status of annual contributions.

Decision SC62-36: The Standing Committee noted the actions listed in paragraphs 12 and 13 of document SC62 Doc 8.2 on group confirmation of outstanding contributions as part of the audit process.

Decision SC62-37: The Standing Committee noted the actions listed in paragraphs 15, 17, 18 and 19 of document SC62 Doc 8.2 to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions by the Contracting Parties.

Decision SC62-38: The Standing Committee noted the changes in annual contributions receivable and in the annual provision against contributions receivable.

Decision SC62-39: The Standing Committee noted the status of the voluntary contributions received from the Contracting Parties in the Africa region outlined in paragraph 22 of document SC62 Doc.8.2.

Agenda item 8.1: Financial and budgetary matters – report of the Subgroup on Finance: Report on financial matters for 2022 and 2023
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106. The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance presented the sections of document SC62 Com.1 Rev.2 *Report of the Subgroup on Finance* pertaining to financial matters for 2022 and 2023.

107. A Standing Committee member, on behalf of a regional group of Parties, suggested introducing into the reports prepared on financial matters graphical representations for easy visualization of budget categories. He further requested clarifications and context on: IUCN administrative service charges in the audited statements at Annex 1 Table I of document SC62 Doc.8.1; an overspend and underspends against the budget for certain budget lines in 2022, shown at Annex 2; and the amount allocated to support Ramsar Regional Initiatives in the 2023 budget at Annex 4.

108. The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and the Secretariat provided the required clarifications, underscoring the usefulness of graphical representations.

109. Interventions were made by Rwanda on behalf of the African Region.

Decision SC62-40: The Standing Committee accepted the 2022 audited financial statements as of 31 December 2022.

Decision SC62-41: The Standing Committee noted the core budget results for 2022.

Decision SC62-42: The Standing Committee noted the status of the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2022.

Decision SC62-43: The Standing Committee approved the carry forward of the pre-committed funds totalling CHF 701,000 from 2022 to 2023, as included in column D of the table in Annex 1 Core budget 2023 of document SC62 Doc 8.1.

Decision SC62-44: The Standing Committee approved the repurposing of unspent balance for Ramsar Advisory Missions, as described in paragraph 11 of document SC62 Doc.8.1.

Decision SC62-45: The Standing Committee approved the allocation of 2022 surplus of CHF 140,000 to complement voluntary funding for COP14 delegate travel, as described in paragraph 18 of document SC62 Doc.8.1.

Decision SC62-46: The Standing Committee approved the allocation of CHF 30,000 from the core budget to the Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI) for activities in 2023, as described in paragraph 32 of document SC62 Doc.8.1.

Decision SC62-47: The Standing Committee approved allocation of 2022 surplus amounting to:

- CHF 33,000 for review of previous Resolutions and decisions;
- CHF 7,000 for approaches and online systems to enhance collaboration between Contracting Parties intersessionally; and
- CHF 90,000 for technical support during the 2023-2025 triennium to ensure that key data is available in the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) for Wetlands of International Importance in all regions, with a focus on Site boundaries, noting that updating Site data is primarily the responsibility of Contracting Parties, and should be encouraged before utilizing the service.¹

Agenda item 26: Wetland City Accreditation: Establishment of the Independent Advisory Committee

110. The Republic of Korea, on behalf of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) presented document SC62 Doc.26 Rev.1, highlighting the composition of the IAC as contained in the document.

111. Austria, as outgoing Chair of the IAC, highlighted the success of the Wetland City Accreditation, including the Roundtable of Wetland City Mayors.

Decision SC62-48: The Standing Committee confirmed the membership of the Independent Advisory Committee, as described in Table 1 of document SC62 Doc.26 Rev.1, for the 2023-2025 triennium.

Agenda item 11: Secretariat report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention (continued)

112. The Chair of the Standing Committee, on behalf of the Management Working Group, reported that, regarding establishing a process for recruiting a new Secretary General, it is the view of the Working Group that a draft resolution is not needed. He proposed that the Management Working Group produce a document identifying the process for recruiting a new Secretary General.

113. Standing Committee members agreed with the Chair's suggestion.

Decision SC62-49: The Standing Committee requested the Management Working Group to prepare a document that identifies the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting, noting that this Decision supersedes Decision SC59-40.

¹ For the resulting core budget for 2023, see Annex 1 of [document SC62 Com.1 Rev.2 Report of the Subgroup on Finance, 4 September 2023](#).

Agenda item 19: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, including work plan for 2023-2025 (continued)

114. A Standing Committee member suggested establishing a working group to explore difficulties that Contracting Parties experience with the current wetland classification system under the Convention.
115. Other Standing Committee members, noting the burden that the existence of too many intersessional working groups places on Parties, suggested tasking the STRP with such a request, including by consulting with STRP National Focal Points.
116. The STRP Chair suggested initiating work by discussing the suitability and application of the current classification system at STRP26 and reporting back to SC63 for its consideration on further steps.
117. Other Standing Committee members offered to share national experiences and lessons learned from the preparation of wetland inventories; and encouraged considering national inventories in other fora, including for ensuring consistent use of wetland typology.
118. Interventions were made by Austria, Brazil, Georgia and Sweden.

Decision SC62-50: The Standing Committee requested the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to discuss the application of the current Ramsar wetland classification system at its 26th meeting and to report back to the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee, including if required the outline of a proposed approach for a technical review in consultation with Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners and other multilateral environmental agreements, and requested the STRP to consider the use of a survey of STRP National Focal Points to collate technical feedback on the classification system from different regions.

Friday 8 September 2023

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 11: Secretariat report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention (continued)

119. South Africa, as Chair of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening, reported back to plenary, noting that the Working Group had finalized its considerations, agreeing on the terms of reference for the Working Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention. It added that the terms of reference had been circulated on Thursday, 7 September 2023 to the Standing Committee.
120. A Standing Committee member suggested deleting a reference to leveraging widely used collaboration tools such as SharePoint, and a more bespoke secure integrated platform.
121. A Standing Committee member stressed that according to Resolution XIV.3, the terms of reference shall be presented by the Working Group to the Standing Committee, emphasizing that they are not open to further discussion.

122. Following discussions and input by the Legal Advisor, the Standing Committee took note of the terms of reference as presented by the Working Group. The terms of reference are contained in document SC62 Com.2.
123. Interventions were made by Colombia and Sweden.

Decision SC62-51: The Standing Committee took note of the terms of reference agreed by the Working Group presented to SC62 in document SC62 Com.2.

Agenda item 21: National Report for COP15 (continued)

124. Brazil, as chair of the contact group, reported on the group's deliberations, noting that interested Contracting Parties addressed all comments and amendments presented in plenary and reached consensus on a text addressing all concerns, to be presented to the Standing Committee.
125. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested that Standing Committee members review the amendments included in document SC62 Com.3 prior to approval later in the session.

Agenda item 22: Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

126. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.22, highlighting, among other things: newly designated Wetlands of International Importance and extensions of existing "Ramsar Sites"; Sites for which information had been updated; and the status of Sites with reports of human-induced negative changes to their ecological character. The Secretariat noted that the document would be updated after the meeting with corrections received on the status of certain Sites.
127. Some Standing Committee members suggested: simplifying the format, and easing and streamlining the procedure for completing Ramsar Information Sheets (RISs) for new and updated Sites, noting constraints in human and financial resources and turnover of staff during the process; reviewing the required frequency of RIS updates; notifications for Parties of Sites for which the update would soon be due; instructing the Secretariat to prepare the report on the status of the List of Wetlands of International Importance only once every triennium, for presentation to the COP; and convening a session for all Contracting Parties that face difficulties with the process to discuss challenges, share experiences and consider solutions, and possibly prepare a draft resolution for consideration at COP15 promoting structured funding and capacity building for this purpose.
128. Two Standing Committee members shared national efforts and lessons learned during the process of updating RISs. The STRP Chair proposed that the STRP support and advise the Secretariat on the matter as needed.
129. Canada on behalf of Mexico requested a Ramsar Advisory Mission for the Parque Nacional Sistema Arrecifal Veracruzano in Mexico.
130. Interventions were made by Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada on behalf of Mexico, China, France, Georgia, Madagascar for the African Region, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sweden and the STRP Chair.

Decision SC62-52: The Standing Committee took note of the updated report on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Decision SC62-53: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit a report to SC63 on the challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of Ramsar Information Sheets, including:

- systemic, procedural and other technical challenges and options; and
- financial challenges, needs and opportunities.

In doing so the Secretariat will obtain and collate inputs in consultation with Contracting Parties, the STRP and other stakeholders. The Secretariat will develop the approach to undertake the task in consultation with Contracting Parties through written procedures and online session(s).

Decision SC62-54: The Standing Committee decided that the global report on the status of the List of Wetlands of International Importance is to be prepared by the Secretariat only once per triennium, for presentation to the COP, and repealed Decision SC35-28 on the same matter.

Agenda item 23: Report on the process undertaken by the Secretariat to include a site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

131. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.23, noting that the document: clarifies the distinction between designation and listing of Wetlands of International Importance; recalls the responsibilities of the Secretariat on the listing of a Ramsar Site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance; outlines guidance of the Convention in identifying and designating Sites; and describes the overall process for designating a Site.
132. A Standing Committee member suggested simplifying the process by delegating the Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisors to check and sign off the RISs and associated map files.
133. Some Contracting Parties called for all Parties to be able to track the process of designation and listing of Sites, through a platform accessible to all Parties, to increase transparency. A Standing Committee member further suggested that establishing such a platform and standards for the process, such as the protocol on maps to be used, would help avoid Parties being presented with a *fait accompli* after a Ramsar Site had been included in the Ramsar List.
134. The Standing Committee Chair suggested, and delegates agreed, that Contracting Parties will submit relevant suggestions in writing by 30 November 2023 for compilation and further discussion at SC63, following a call by the Secretariat.
135. Some Contracting Parties recalled that all proposals for improvement need to be in accordance with the text of the Convention and Appendix 2 of Resolution XI.8, the *Strategic framework and guidelines to guide the evolution of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Wetlands Convention*. Another noted that proposals should be for discussion at upcoming Standing Committee meetings, while any decisions to change the process would need to come forward to COP15, as per the process outlined in Resolution XIV.13.
136. Interventions were made by Algeria, Colombia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Morocco, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Decision SC62-55: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to send a notification to National Focal Points inviting the submission of proposals on strengthening the process to include a Site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and prepare a report compiling these inputs, accompanied by the opinion of the Legal Advisor, for consideration at SC63.

Agenda item 21: National Report for COP15 (continued)

137. The Chair recalled the earlier discussion of this agenda item.

Decision SC62-56: The Standing Committee approved the COP15 National Report form as presented in document SC62 Com.3.

Agenda item 24: Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20

138. The Secretariat presented document SC62 Doc.24 Rev.1, focusing on: a notification by Ukraine on changes in ecological character of 16 Wetlands of International Importance and of potential changes in ecological character of a further 15; Secretariat's activities as a member of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Environmental Assessments for Ukraine; activities by the Secretariat under the leadership of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to assess the environmental impacts of the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (KHPP) on the Dnipro River in Ukraine's Kherson Oblast; a seminar to be organized by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group with a focus on Earth observations and remote sensing; and the Secretariat's contributions to the "Inventory of assessments of the environmental damage resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine" conducted under the Inter-Agency Coordination Group.

139. Ukraine presented a statement on behalf of 48 Contracting Parties, which is annexed to the present report as Annex 1. The delegate invited other Contracting Parties to align themselves with the statement.

140. Three Standing Committee members expressed appreciation for the thorough and factual update, welcoming meaningful work through cooperation and coordination of UN agencies.

141. The United States of America noted its voluntary contribution towards the Secretariat's work in implementing the actions requested in Resolution XIV.20. It requested further information on the seminar on Earth observations and remote sensing, which was provided by the Secretariat.

142. Interventions were made by Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

Decision SC62-57: The Standing Committee took note of the update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20 on *The Ramsar Convention's response to environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression.*

Agenda item 27: Dates of the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee

143. The Secretariat suggested holding the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC63) from 3 to 7 June 2024, and further suggested holding SC64 from 20 to 24 January 2025.

144. Two Standing Committee members suggested deciding at SC63 on the SC64 dates, while another proposed an intersessional discussion to finalize the dates for SC64 as soon as possible.
145. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested, and delegates agreed, to finalize the dates for SC63 and decide on the dates for SC64 at SC63.
146. Interventions were made by China, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Sweden.

Decision SC62-58: The Standing Committee decided that the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee will take place from 3 to 7 June 2024, noting that dates for the 64th meeting will be decided at SC63.

Agenda item 28: Adoption of the report of the meeting

147. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted that the draft reports on the sessions from Tuesday 5 to Thursday 7 September 2023 (documents SC62 Rep.1 to SC62 Rep.6) have been uploaded for delegates' review.
148. Standing Committee members offered amendments on SC62 Rep.2, SC62 Rep.3, SC62 Rep.5 and SC62 Rep.6.
149. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted that the Secretariat will prepare the final report, capturing comments and amendments submitted by Parties on the draft session reports. He clarified that the draft report of the plenary session on Friday 8 September will be available on Monday 11 September for review by Standing Committee members by Friday 15 September.
150. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Panama, Rwanda, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States of America and the STRP Chair.

Agenda item 29: Any other business

151. Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland read out statements related to Sites included by the United Kingdom on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, both asking that these be included in the report of the meeting. These are annexed to the present report as Annex 2 and Annex 3.

Agenda item 30: Closing remarks

152. The Chair of the Standing Committee stressed that "it is time for action", reminding delegates, upon the closing of the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee, that many tasks and much work await. He encouraged them to bring the message to all stakeholders on the consensus built over the course of SC62 and that the Convention on Wetlands community is ready to take action. He thanked all participants for their support, kindness and indulgence, and looked forward to seeing everyone in June for SC63.
153. The Secretary General thanked all participants for their engagement, dedication, support and confidence; the Secretariat for its tireless work; IUCN and Switzerland for their support; and the Chair for his leadership and guidance.

Annex 1: Joint statement under Agenda item 24: *Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20*

Joint Statement Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Dear Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of 48 countries, among which there are 14 Standing Committee Members and Alternative Members, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Georgia, Guatemala, Japan, Republic of Korea, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, as well as other Contracting Parties: Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Uruguay, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and my own country, Ukraine.

This statement is open for further alignments.

Distinguished Delegates,

We welcome the factual update report from the Secretariat, as requested by the COP, on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20, and invite the Standing Committee to take note of the update. This report demonstrates the ongoing work undertaken by the Secretariat to implement an independent assessment of the impacts of Russia's war on Ukraine's internationally important wetlands.

Last year during the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention we adopted the Resolution XIV.20, thus, reaffirming our commitments to the Ramsar Convention's principles and objectives and showing the ability of the Convention to respond to the emergency situation.

We highly appreciate the efforts made during the COP14 by the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat for the recognition of the devastating impact of the Russian Federation's aggression on the environment in Ukraine, including the disruption of the ecological status of 16 Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and potential damage to another 15 Ramsar Sites.

However, Russia's aggression has led to huge ecological damage in the territory of Ukraine. Further, the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (KHPP) is a major environmental disaster for Europe and has had a grave impact for the Kakhovka Reservoir, which has now dried up, threatening 2.9 million hectares of the Emerald Network. These are nature conservation territories of considerable ecological value, which serve as habitats for the internationally important population of waterbirds.

Destruction of the dam and the sharp descent of large volumes of water from the Kakhovka Reservoir has likely led to a change in the ecological character of three Ramsar sites: the flooding of the "Dnipro River Delta", leading to the death of mammals and other animals and of nesting birds; a sharp change in the hydrological regime and the draining of the "Archipelago Velyki and Mali

Kuchugury” and the “Sim Maiakiv Floodplain”. The situation also threatens desalination of the adjacent seawater areas, which may have caused a change in the ecological character in the two Ramsar sites “Yagorlytska Bay” and “Tendrivska Bay”.

In addition, three large flyway routes of wetland birds run through Ukraine. Due to constant explosions and the impossibility of breeding, the flyway routes change, and bird populations do not have time to recover after long flights. This will ultimately leave its mark on the biodiversity of Europe, but also the African continent.

With this in mind, we welcome the ongoing actions taken by Contracting Parties and international organizations to support the independent assessment and subsequent advice on the restoration of Ukraine’s wetlands of international importance. We affirm our support to reconstruction in Ukraine, including for providing assistance for the restoration of its wetlands of international importance.

For the past five decades, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has served as a vital international legal instrument promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Ramsar represents an essential international forum for compiling and sharing knowledge about sustainable wetland management with great potential to further enhance environmental security.

Reaffirming our commitment to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention, we reiterate our demand for the Russian Federation to cease its aggression and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine, thus restoring Ukraine's sovereign right to protect, restore, and wisely use its Ramsar sites within its internationally recognized borders.

We would like this statement to be included in the report of the meeting.

I thank you.

Annex 2

Statements of Argentina under Agenda item 29: *Any other business*

1.

Argentina referred to the wetlands declared by United Kingdom in the Malvinas Islands and reiterated its objections to the inclusion in the list and requests to the Secretariat to correct the omissions and mistakes, in particular the Wetlands Isla de los Leones (“Sea Lion Island” in the document) and the one located near Punta Fox (“Bertha's beach” in the document), both located in the Malvinas Islands. It further requested that double nomenclature (Spanish and English) be used to refer to the Malvinas Islands, as well as a footnote that adequately reflects the existence of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Editorial Directive ST/CS/SER.a/42.

2.

Argentina replied that the existence of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is undeniable, as has been recognized by Resolution 2065 (XX) and subsequent resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, the resolutions of the Special Committee on Decolonization and by the United Kingdom itself.

3.

Argentina further replied that the principle of self-determination of peoples, the element on which the United Kingdom bases its refusal to resume sovereignty negotiations, is inapplicable to the controversy between the two countries over the sovereignty of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime spaces, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization.

Annex 3

Statements of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Agenda item 29: *Any other business*

1.

The UK intervened in response to Argentina's proposal:

I am disappointed that I am responding to this matter in this forum, but I will briefly respond to Argentina's intervention.

In all fora the UK will continue to insist on the use of the names that the Islanders recognise and wish to use: the Falkland Islands, Sea Lion Island and Bertha's Beach.

The United Nations directive has mandated the use of double nomenclature and the relevant footnote in UN-issued documentation only.

Therefore the UK opposes the proposal by Argentina for double nomenclature to be applied in any maps or documents provided to or by the Ramsar Secretariat or in any formal documents of the Convention when referring to the Falkland Islands.

Double nomenclature is applied in UN documentation only and therefore it is not appropriate to apply it here.

We already have a pre-existing approach to this matter in the Ramsar List that was agreed with Argentina, and I would expect to continue this approach going forward.

2.

The UK then intervened again in response to Argentina's response:

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and surrounding maritime areas.

The UK is steadfast in its support for the right of self-determination for the Falkland Islanders. This right is enshrined in the UN Charter and in article one of the two UN Covenants on human rights. The UN has never made any statements or passed any resolutions denying the people of the Falkland Islands the right to determine by whom they are governed - a right enshrined in the UN Charter. Our position on supporting self-determination for the Falkland Islanders is underpinned by the United Nations Charter, which is binding on all UN members.

The Falkland Islanders have as much right to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development as any other peoples.