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

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

1. Brazil, as the Co-Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group, presented the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group, as contained in document SC63 Doc.11. Brazil reported on the non-paper draft of the 5th Strategic Plan developed by the Co-Chairs, and reported that the Working Group was currently focused on reaching consensus on the goals for SP5, highlighting that the Working Group had reached consensus on three goals. Noting that the Working Group would meet again on 5 June 2024, he suggested postponing discussions to take into account the outcomes of that meeting.

2. Contracting Parties thanked the Working Group for progress made and highlighted the need for alignment of the Strategic Plan with projects of the IOPs; for improved fundraising; for harmonizing of the Strategic Plan’s goals with corresponding targets and ensuring they are not overlapping; for the goals and targets to be clear and assessable; and for the recognition of the importance of conservation efforts beyond Wetlands of International Importance.

3. The Chair of the STRP highlighted relevant advice by the STRP, contained in paragraphs 11, 13 and 15 of his report to Standing Committee (document SC63 Doc.19), noting that the development of SP5 is a high-priority task for the STRP.

4. The Chair of the Standing Committee highlighted potential for considerable progress during SC63 and noted that the agenda item will be revisited in plenary following the meeting of the Working Group on Wednesday.

5. Interventions were made by Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya on behalf of the Contracting Parties of the Africa region, and Sweden.


of the Convention, and summarizing future steps towards developing a draft resolution for consideration by the Standing Committee at SC64.

7. Contracting Parties thanked the Working Group for its diligent work; highlighted challenges currently facing the Secretariat related to administrative arrangements, human resources and visibility, as well as options to address them, and implications of the options identified in terms of their benefits in dealing with specific root causes; and stressed that the outcomes will enable a better common understanding as a basis for future discussions.

8. Interventions were made by Colombia, and Zimbabwe on behalf of the Contracting Parties of the Africa region.


9. The Secretariat presented its report on COP15, contained in document SC63 Doc.21.1. The Secretariat presented Zimbabwe’s proposed theme for COP15 “Protecting wetlands for our common future”, noting that it had been endorsed by both the Subgroup on COP15 and the Management Working Group, and a logo, which had been endorsed by the Subgroup on COP15.

10. Zimbabwe, as COP15 host, elaborated on the theme and logo, highlighting and explaining elements of its iconography; its water and bird motif; the circular frame; and the colour palette.

11. Contracting Parties asked for clarifications on the theme’s conceptional underpinnings to assist their preparations for COP15; stressed the need for a strong message on protecting wetlands; and asked questions on the logo’s translation and on logistics.

12. Interventions were made by the Germany, Switzerland, the United States of America, and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

Decision SC63-11: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretariat on COP15 as found in document SC63 Doc.21.1, including the indicative timeline of events and deadlines leading up to COP15, and approved the proposed theme and logo for COP15.

Agenda item 21.2: Preparation of COP15: Report of the Subgroup on COP15

13. Zimbabwe presented an oral report on preparations for hosting COP15. Zimbabwe highlighted that a host agreement has been signed and outlined preparations, including securing the conference venue; arranging transport for delegates, blocking hotel rooms, developing an event website; organizing field visits; and hosting a high-level segment. The Chair thanked Zimbabwe and the Secretariat for their efforts in preparing COP15.

Decision SC63-12: The Standing Committee took note of the report presented by the Chair of the Subgroup on COP15.
Agenda item 21.3: Preparation of COP15: Proposal of the Secretariat on the process for preparation and review of draft resolutions

14. The Secretariat outlined the proposed process for the preparation and review of draft resolutions for COP15 as presented in document SC63 Doc. 21.3, highlighting the deadline for submission of draft resolutions of 20 November 2024, 60 days in advance of SC64.

15. A Standing Committee member suggested minor amendments to the guidance note on preparation of submissions for draft resolutions, contained in Annex 1 of the same document, to add a section on resolutions to be repealed or revised; to provide a fuller breakdown of costs, differentiating between core or non-core funding; and to strengthen the wording on the ten-page limit. The Chair noted that these edits will be made in the guidance before it is shared.

16. Interventions were made by Canada and Sweden.

Decision SC63-13: The Standing Committee:
   a. noted the indicative timeline for events related to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15), in paragraph 3 of document SC63 Doc. 21.3;
   b. instructed the Secretariat to share with Contracting Parties the guidance for the preparation of draft resolutions for COP15, as presented in Annex 1 and amended in plenary, with deadlines for submission updated to reflect the dates decided for the Committee’s 64th meeting (SC64);
   c. approved the guidance on the Secretariat’s role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, and the processes for doing so both before and after SC64, as proposed in paragraphs 7 to 10;
   d. instructed the Secretariat to follow for COP15 the process for review of draft resolutions applied at COP14, applying logistical refinements as appropriate.

Agenda item 21.4: Preparation of COP15: Proposal of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

17. The Secretariat presented the proposed process for administering the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards scheme as contained in document SC63 Doc.21.4. The Secretariat highlighted three proposed award categories, an Award for Young Wetland Champions; an Award for Science; and an Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award.

18. One member suggested replacing the Award for Science with the Award for Innovation, to open it to a wider set of potential candidates, and adding “local communities” to the Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award. The Chair reminded Contracting Parties about the six potential award categories defined by Resolution XIV.9, Paragraph 8.

Decision SC63-14: The Standing Committee noted the estimated budget, funding requirements and timeline for the Award nomination process and decided that awards will be presented in the following categories: The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Young Wetland Champions, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Innovation, and the Ramsar Wetland Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award.
19. The Secretariat presented its report on implementation of Resolution XIV.3, contained in document SC63 Doc.13.1. The Secretariat noted that Resolution XIV.3, among other things, instructs the Secretariat to improve its communications approach towards Contracting Parties and to submit an updated strategy for communications with Parties for consideration at SC63. He added that the updated strategy, which is annexed to document SC63 Doc.13.1, outlines an improved communications approach organized in three categories: information sharing; official communications and virtual meeting management; and capacity building. The Secretariat highlighted that it will apply the United Nations guidelines for gender-inclusive language in its communications and stressed that the plan can be implemented with currently available resources.

20. Parties expressed appreciation for the Secretariat’s improved communications approach; encouraged it to further promote effectiveness and efficiency through enhanced communication; and highlighted the importance of capacity-building activities.

21. Interventions were made by Indonesia, Japan and Sweden.

**Decision SC63-15:** The Standing Committee endorsed the proposed plan in SC63 Doc.13.1 for communication with Contracting Parties and noted that the Secretariat will apply the United Nations guidelines for gender-inclusive language in its communications.

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**Agenda item 13.2: Report of the Secretariat on implementation of Resolution XIV.3: Enhancing intersessional collaboration between Contracting Parties (follow-up to Standing Committee Decision SC62-18)**

22. The Secretariat introduced its report on enhancing intersessional collaboration between Contracting Parties. The Secretariat highlighted that Decision SC62-18 instructed the Secretariat to follow an approach which facilitates communication through conventional means such as email, phone calls, and video meetings as well as to use SharePoint to enable Parties to submit and provide comments on documents, which are visible and accessible to all members of a defined group. The Secretariat further noted that the same Decision instructed the Secretariat to present a plan to SC63 on enhanced intersessional collaboration, which is contained in document SC63 Doc.13.2.

23. Some Contracting Parties suggested amendments, stressing that virtual tools and modalities can be useful but should not replace in-person negotiations; modify existing rights and obligations of Contracting Parties; or set a precedent for future processes under the Convention.

24. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted that the amendments would be included in a revised document.

25. One Contracting Party suggested establishing a virtual platform for increased visibility of the procedure for designating Wetlands of International Importance.

26. Interventions were made by Brazil, Colombia and Indonesia.
Decision SC63-16: The Standing Committee endorsed the tools and approach proposed in SC63 Doc.13.2 Rev.1 for enhancing intersessional collaboration between Contracting Parties.