



## 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Ramsar COP12 DOC.5 Rev.1

### Report of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee

#### Introduction

1. The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention was established by [Resolution 3.3](#) (Regina, 1987) to oversee Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat between ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. *The regional composition, functions, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and its members are governed by [Resolution VII.1](#) (1999) as amended by [Resolution XI.19](#) (2012).* Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Standing Committee, in all matters not specified in Resolution VII.1, are governed by the [Rules of Procedure for the Conference of the Contracting Parties](#), *mutatis mutandis*. The Standing Committee has recently approved forwarding DOC. SC48-03 Rev.1 Rules of Procedure, as further amended by SC48, for consideration of the Conference of the Parties in COP12 DOC.3.
2. The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties elected a new Standing Committee (SC) to oversee Convention matters during the period until the next COP, set for Uruguay in 2015, and the inaugural meeting of the new Standing Committee (SC45) elected Romania as its Chair and South Africa as Vice Chair. The present composition of the Standing Committee reflects the regional proportions mandated by Resolution XI.19, outlined below:  
  
**Africa:** Burundi, Guinea, South Africa, Tunisia (Alternate members: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Namibia);  
**Asia:** Cambodia, Republic of Korea, and United Arab Emirates (Alternate members: Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal);  
**Europe:** Croatia, Denmark, Finland, and France (Alternate member: Czech Republic);  
**Neotropics:** Chile, Cuba, Guatemala (Alternate members: Argentina, Costa Rica, Jamaica); **North America:** Canada (Alternate member: Mexico);  
**Oceania:** Fiji (Alternate member: Palau).
3. Additionally the COP11 host country, Romania, and the COP12 host country, Uruguay, are full members as well.
4. In addition, Switzerland, the host country of the Ramsar Secretariat, the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and five official International Organization Partners in the work of the Convention: BirdLife International, IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, WWF International, have Permanent Observer status.
5. Countries that are not Contracting Parties but have expressed an interest in joining the Convention, as well as other experts and/or institutions that the Standing Committee may consider appropriate for assisting in its consideration of particular agenda items, may be also

admitted as observers at meetings of the Standing Committee.

6. At its 45<sup>th</sup> meeting, following the close of COP11 in Bucharest, the new Standing Committee elected Romania as its Chair, South Africa as Vice-Chair, and Canada as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance. Romania has been represented in the Chair by Mr. Mihail Faca for the 45<sup>th</sup>-47<sup>th</sup> SC meetings, and subsequently by Mrs. Doina Catrinoiu.
7. The Standing Committee has been entrusted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties with the supervision of ongoing matters, including the implementation of policy by the Ramsar Secretariat, the execution of the Convention's budget, the conduct of Secretariat affairs, the conduct of the Secretary General recruitment process and the preparation of Ramsar COP12 in 2015, as well as consideration of any other appropriate matters raised by members and observers.
8. Notice of each meeting of the Standing Committee was distributed to all Contracting Parties through diplomatic notification, and Parties not members of the Committee were invited to attend in an observer capacity if they so wished. An increasing number of Parties have attended Standing Committee meetings as observers. All documentation to be considered by each SC meeting has been e-mailed to the Administrative Authorities and posted on the Ramsar website at least one month in advance of the meeting.
9. The outcomes of each Standing Committee meeting have been distributed to all Contracting Parties under the cover of a diplomatic note, with the full text of the minutes in the English language, approved by the SC members at the end of the last plenary session of each meeting, and the texts of all decisions in English, French or Spanish, as appropriate. The minutes and the texts of the decisions have also been posted promptly on the Ramsar website
10. In the present report, only the main issues the Standing Committee has dealt with are highlighted, from the middle July 2012 (the close of the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties) to the end of May 2015.

#### **Overview of the main issues considered and decisions taken**

11. The Standing Committee met four times during the period under review:
  - 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting: immediately after the close of Ramsar COP11 in Bucharest, Romania, on 10 July 2012;
  - 46<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 08 – 12 April 2013, in Gland, Switzerland;
  - 47<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 24 – 28 March 2014, in Gland, Switzerland;
  - 48<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 28 – 30 January 2015, in Gland, Switzerland.
12. The Management Working Group of the Standing Committee met, in ordinary or closed sessions, prior to the 46<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, and 48<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meetings in order to discuss issues under its competences and to report its recommendations to the Standing Committee meeting in plenary.
13. The Strategic Plan Working Group of the Standing Committee met prior to the 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> meetings in order to discuss the issues under their mandates and report its recommendations to the plenary meeting of the SC.
14. The Standing Committee Subgroups on Finance and on COP12 met just before each of the Standing Committee meetings, except SC45, where they discussed the issues within their

mandates and reported their recommendations to the Standing Committee meeting in plenary session. This practice has allowed discussions to proceed more smoothly in the plenary sessions in most cases.

15. In order to promote the flow of information to members of the Standing Committee, and to Parties generally, the Secretariat has regularly circulated updates on issues between meetings of the Standing Committee. In addition, the Secretary General reports regularly on emerging issues to the Executive Team of the Standing Committee, i.e., the Chair and Vice Chair and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance.
16. At each of its annual meetings in 2013, 2014, and 2015, the Committee dealt with standing issues on the Committee's agenda, including:
  - a) Review of the audited accounts of the previous years. Normally, after study by the Subgroup on Finance, the Standing Committee approves the audited accounts for each year on behalf of the Conference of the Parties.
  - b) Review of the financial situation of the current year and the forecast of income and expenditure until the year's end, and adoption of the budget for the following year.
  - c) Review of the work of the Secretariat.
  - d) Review of reports on the implementation of the work programmes of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the CEPA Oversight Panel, and recommendations for their future work.
  - e) Review of the financial and implementation status of projects undertaken by the Secretariat.
17. The following section is a summary report on the main issues dealt with and decisions taken by the Standing Committee at each of its meetings. The reports of the meetings and texts of the decisions are available at <http://www.ramsar.org/about/next-standing-committee-meeting>.

#### **45<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Bucharest, Romania, 10 July 2012**

18. As mentioned above, at its 45<sup>th</sup> meeting, following the close of COP11 in Bucharest, the Standing Committee members newly chosen by the Conference of the Parties elected Romania as their Chair and South Africa as Vice-Chair.
19. In addition, the SC elected the following Parties to the Subgroup on Finance for 2012-2015: Burundi (Africa), Canada (North America), Chile (Neotropics), Denmark (Europe), Fiji (Oceania), and Republic of Korea (Asia). Canada was elected as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance.
20. The SC also determined that the outgoing and incoming Chairs and vice-chairs of the Standing Committee and Chairs of Subgroup on Finance should meet as the Transition Committee of the Management Working Group just prior to the first full business meeting of the new Standing Committee following each COP, in accordance with Resolution X.4 (2008), in order to facilitate a smooth transition, allowing the outgoing SC officers to brief the incoming officers on customary practices and outstanding issues.
21. Regarding the process and timelines for the recruitment of the next Secretary General, the

Standing Committee confirmed the procedures and timeline for the recruitment of the next Secretary General as recommended by the SC decision SC44-10, allowing SC46 to make the selection of the new SG. The Standing Committee meeting urged the Transition Committee of the MWG to work in cooperation with reference to the recruitment of the next Secretary General and other matters.

### **Recruitment of the next Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention**

22. Following Decision SC45-4, the Executive Team of Standing Committee has taken the lead in the process of recruiting the next Secretary General, assisted by the Secretariat.
23. The Executive Team, Mr. Anada Tiéga, Secretary General, Ms Anna Goodwin, Finance Officer, Ms Valerie Higgins, Administrative Officer and Ms Mireille Katz, Executive Assistant to the Secretary General joined in a teleconference on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 in order to approve the new schedule and process for the SG recruitment and to establish the team who will drive the screening, shortlisting and selection process.
24. On 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 the members of the Selection Panel met in Gland and on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> they undertook the interviews for the new Secretary General.
25. The selected candidate agreed to take the position of Secretary General and started his work for the Convention on August 12<sup>th</sup> 2013.

### **46<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Gland, Switzerland, 08-12 April 2013**

26. At its first business meeting after COP11, the new Standing Committee expressed appreciation to Anada Tiega, the Secretary General for his entire contribution to advancing the work of the Ramsar Convention during his six-year tenure and took note of the Secretary General's detailed and comprehensive report.
27. The achievements emphasized by the Secretary General included: a healthy financial position of the Secretariat, a higher visibility of the Convention, a good communication, an increased number of Contracting Parties.
28. The needs to increase visibility even more, to find opportunities for integrating wetlands into national priorities, to create and realize synergies, and to further educational and communication initiatives were highlighted in this report.
29. At its first full business meeting, the new Standing Committee elected the members to serve on the Subgroup on the preparation of COP12, with Uruguay as its Chair and including the COP11 host country, Romania and one SC member from each region. The members chosen to serve were, for Africa, South Africa; for Asia, Cambodia; for Europe, France; for the Neotropics, Guatemala; for North America, Mexico; and for Oceania, Fiji.
30. Concerning other matters related to COP12, the Standing Committee urged the Secretariat to continue working with Uruguay to finalize and sign the Memorandum of Understanding, and approved the COP12 National Report format.
31. The Committee also determined that henceforward the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance should continue to act as an informal intersessional "Executive Team" to guide the Secretary General on matters arising, and it agreed that a general principle

should be to establish continuity (calling upon past Chairs, etc.) in all Standing Committee subgroups, in particular the Subgroups on Finance and the COP.

32. The Committee adopted the Secretariat's Work Plan for 2013 as the basis of its programme of work, allowing for flexibility pending its review by the incoming Secretary General.
33. In order to take forward the preparation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan, the Standing Committee established a Strategic Plan Working Group, to include Contracting Parties, STRP, the CEPA Oversight Panel, International Organization Partners, Regional Initiatives and other Ramsar stakeholders.
34. The Standing Committee welcomed the work of the Culture Working Group and encouraged it to continue its work and recommended its work to be appropriately reflected in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan. The Committee requested the Culture Working Group to take into account and cooperate with the development of a wetlands cities accreditation mechanism, considering the offer of the Republic of Korea to host a workshop on potential wetland city accreditation mechanisms and the interest of Contracting Parties on the further development of the accreditation initiative and approach.
35. The Standing Committee endorsed the revised Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for the 15 Regional Initiatives, and requested the Secretariat to finalize and issue the guidelines taking into account any further amendments received from Parties. Noting the shortcomings and priority areas for action identified in the annual reports of the Regional Initiatives, the Committee requested the Regional Initiatives to report, through the Secretariat, on the remedial steps they had taken at its 47<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Committee decided to allocate from the Ramsar core budget 2013 a total of CHF 129,719 to six Regional Initiatives, East African centre, Niger River basin network, La Plata river basin network, Caribbean network, American mangroves and reefs network and Carpathian Wetland Initiatives, as requested for their activities in 2013.
36. On financial matters, the SC approved the 2012 audited accounts noting the healthy Reserve Fund balance of CHF 812,000 at the beginning of the triennium 2013-2015; decided that there would be no change to the core and non-core budget allocations for 2013 approved by COP11; decided that the forecast savings of CHF 326,000 be used to fund the prioritized COP-approved non-core budget items immediately and at a later date in 2013; decided to support Regional Initiatives (networks and centres); requested the Secretariat to review the status of current Small Grants Funds portfolio; noted the current status of Contracting Parties' outstanding annual contributions and encouraged the Secretariat, working with members of the Subgroup on Finance, to continue to take actions to resolve this situation.
37. After noting the report of the Chair of STRP and approving a number of recommendations concerning the Ramsar Information Sheet and the preparation of a report on the state of the world's wetlands, including the STRP 2013-2015 Work Plan for finalization, the Standing Committee urged Contracting Parties and other partners and donors to provide, through voluntary contributions, the resources needed to enable the completion of these tasks.
38. The Standing Committee, having considered the feedback from regional groups on the composition of subgroups that will follow up Resolution XI.1 of COP11 on administrative reform, decided on the following Subgroups, and their membership and chairs: Subgroup 1, on accommodation of United Nations languages into the Ramsar Convention; Subgroup 2, on elevating the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention; Subgroup 3 on enhancing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities.

39. After approving a number of recommendations on Communications, Education, Participation, and Awareness prepared by the CEPA Oversight Panel, including the Panel's Work Plan for 2013-2015, the Committee approved World Wetlands Day themes for 2014 and 2015, and welcomed the progress that had been made to date and thanked the project leaders for restructuring and redesigning the Ramsar Convention's website.
40. **Appointment of the next Secretary General** – The Standing Committee approved the selected candidate as the next Secretary General and requested that the details remains confidential, until the public announcement will be made.
41. The public announcement of the appointment of the new Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention was made on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April:

*The Ramsar Convention Standing Committee is pleased to announce that Dr Christopher Briggs has been appointed to, and has accepted, the position of Secretary General. He will be the fifth Secretary General to the Convention and will succeed Mr. Tiéga Anada who has served the Convention for the past six years. Dr Briggs' appointment was approved by the Ramsar Standing Committee during its 46th meeting held in Gland, Switzerland from 8-12 April 2013.*

*Continuing with a short presentation of Dr. Christopher Briggs' work and achievements, The Ramsar Convention Standing Committee Chair, Mr Mihail Faca, would like to wish Dr Briggs every success in this very important and challenging role. The Ramsar Convention welcomes its new Secretary General and looks forward to working closely with him during this triennium.*

#### **47<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Gland, Switzerland, 24 – 28 March 2014**

42. After the new Secretary General presented his vision for the Convention, the Standing Committee acknowledged the importance of taking innovative and inclusive action on the vision's four priorities of communication, capacity building and partnerships as well as measuring and valuing wetlands, while respecting the financial limitations of Parties and funders.
43. In addition to caring for the ordinary financial business (approving the 2013 financial statement subject to any final minor adjustments and audit completion and allocation of the surplus reserve fund balance of CHF 291,000 and the core budget for 2014 as approved by COP11), the SC welcomed the generosity of Switzerland and Uruguay to reduce the shortfall of the COP12 administrative budget and noted the need to raise a further CHF 1.2 million during 2014 and 2015 for the pre-COP regional meetings and sponsoring of delegates to COP. The SC encouraged Parties and the Secretariat to make COP12 fundraising a priority. Concerning the reallocation of surplus funds, the SC directed the surplus be allocated to Strategic Plan, Ramsar Advisory Missions, translation in French and Spanish of SC48 documents, and to COP12. It requested the Secretary General (consulting with the Executive Team as necessary) to determine which of the three urgent, unfunded needs for COP12 delivery (logistics coordination, regional meeting costs, Earth Negotiations Bulletin participation) most need this funding, taking into account other voluntary contributions received for COP12 during 2014.
44. The Standing Committee agreed financial allocations for Regional Initiatives for 2014 and requested an information paper for SC48 on the future of the Small Grants Fund. After noting the current status of Parties' outstanding annual contributions the SC encouraged the Secretariat, working with Finance Subgroup members, to continue to take collaborative actions

to make progress to resolve this issue.

45. In administrative matters, the SC received the report of the report of the Subgroup on COP12 including the progress with preparations for COP. The Standing Committee recognized with appreciation the progress reported, and the efforts made by Uruguay, as well as the early signature of a Memorandum of Understanding for COP12 and approved the dates of COP12 in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 1 to 9 June 2015, and the logo and slogan “Wetlands for our Future” as the theme for COP12 and World Wetlands Day 2015. The SC approved the Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards: categories, criteria and nomination procedures.
46. The SC took note of the progress of the three subgroups established through SC46 decision in order to progress Resolution XI.1 (Convention languages, visibility and ministerial COP segment, enhancing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities) and requested the Secretariat and the Strategic Plan Working Group to follow up their work and submit reports to SC48, in view to submit draft resolutions to COP12.
47. The Standing Committee approved the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG) and requested the SPWG to prepare a new Strategic Plan for the period of two triennia 2016–2021 taking into account the elements of the discussion of the SPWG meeting and the recommendations of parties, and consulting the Ramsar Regional Centres.
48. In other administrative matters the Standing Committee decided to confirm the process recommended by the Review Committee on the delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention, and to request the Secretariat to prepare a draft text for a Resolution addressing accommodation of the Arabic Language into the Convention.
49. The Standing Committee noted the STRP Chair’s report, and his request for Contracting Parties to consider possible ways of sourcing funding for implementation of the highest priority tasks, the report and the progress in the preparation of the new CEPA Programme, the report on the progress of the Ramsar-IUCN Task Force, and the report of the Culture Working Group; it expressed support for the activities of the Ramsar Culture Network and its cooperation with UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre.
50. The Standing Committee noted progress reports concerning: the Status of Ramsar Sites (including updates from Standing Committee participants), Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) redevelopment and The Ramsar – Danone-Evian Partnership, parties expressing thanks for the ongoing contribution of Danone-Evian to the objectives of the Convention.
51. The Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to update the list of draft resolutions for SC48 and COP12 consideration taking into account all the proposals and amendments recommended by Parties.

#### **48<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Gland, Switzerland, 26-30 January 2015**

52. The Standing Committee’s final meeting before the COP was largely devoted to debate on and possible adoption of the Draft Resolutions and amendments to the Rules of Procedure to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties for its consideration in June. Based on the Recommendations made by the Management Working Group, the Standing Committee agreed to focus on the Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP), to minimize references to the Rules of Procedure of Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and to focus on the finalization of the Rules of Procedure for these

subsidiary bodies after COP12. The Standing Committee approved forwarding 15 Draft Resolutions, submitted by the *Secretariat* and by *Thailand, Greece, Tunisia and Republic of Korea, Denmark supported by Finland, Mexico, and the Philippines*, as further amended, for consideration at COP12.

53. In financial matters, the 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, 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;
54. In administrative matters, the Standing Committee approved the Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group, the Report of the Subgroup on COP12 and the Provisional Agenda for COP12, the Secretariat's Work Plan for 2015, the report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel and CEPA Work Programme 2016–2021, taking into consideration the proposed amendments.
55. The SC noted the Report of the Secretary General, the Report of the STRP Chair, the Report of the Secretariat with regard to Communication, the Report of the Secretariat with regard to Partnership and all comments and proposal for amendments on these items, including the requested clarification on several aspects of the report on Partnerships.
56. During a closed session, the SC selected the Ramsar Award laureates and the announcement was made in plenary by the Chair: 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; the Merit Award recipients: Tour du Valat research centre, France; Professor William Mitsch, USA; and Professor Gea Jae Joo, Republic of Korea.
57. In the course of the meeting 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. The Secretary General thanked UAE for making this generous and confirmed that full Cabinet approval had been received for hosting



COP13 in Dubai and that the Minister of Environment & Water had conveyed a letter of confirmation to the Secretariat.

58. The SC noted the Report from the closed session of the Management Working Group regarding the initiation of a process to review the agreements, policies, guidelines and other mechanisms that regulate and guide the relations between and the division of responsibilities between the Standing Committee, the Management Working Group, the Executive Committee, the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Secretary General and IUCN in relation to managing the Secretariat including staff management and the request to be addressed by the Executive Team to IUCN to initiate a 360 degrees evaluation / feedback of the performance of the Secretary General.

### **Concluding remarks**

59. The period since COP11 has been extraordinarily active and constructive for the Standing Committee and its subgroups. Together with the Contracting Parties, STRP, the Secretariat, the regional initiatives, the IOPs and the Convention's many other collaborators, we had to operate at a high level of effectiveness in order to support the implementation of the Convention.
60. The SC mission to continuously advise the Secretariat in managing staff priorities and capacities to respond to key issues of wetland conservation and wise use, to continuously monitor progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 and strive to make resources available to assist Parties in implementing this strategic plan was not an easy one, and all its members made every effort to achieve it.
61. This is reflected in the large number of policy decisions incorporated in the Draft Resolutions and information papers to be considered by COP12, in the large number of Draft Resolution submitted by Parties, and in the large number of comments, proposals, amendments, debates and conclusions which followed at each Ramsar meeting.
62. In this triennium a new Secretary General started his work for the Ramsar Convention and a new vision for the Convention was created and incorporated in the Ramsar's draft Strategic Plan for 2016-2021, a call to "prevent, stop and reverse the degradation and loss of wetlands and to use them wisely." The Standing Committee and its Subgroups expressed again their appreciation to Anada Tiéga, the outgoing Secretary General, for his entire contribution to advancing the work of the Ramsar Convention during his six-year tenure. It welcomes Christopher Briggs, the new Secretary General, and looks forward to working with him for the implementation of the new Strategic Plan and the mission of the Convention.
63. We agree that the mission of the Convention is now far larger, needs far more partners, more commitments and more awareness. The Standing Committee must be careful to ensure that these collaborative arrangements are well chosen for their potential added value for the Convention's work and together we will achieve the optimum desired results.
64. The Standing Committee agree the proposed Four Main Goals of the Strategic Plan: *Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss And Degradation; Effectively Conserving and Managing the Ramsar Site Network; Wisely Using All Wetlands; and Enhancing Implementation;* and to fulfill them there is an urgent need to strengthen capacity for the Convention's implementation by the Contracting Parties at all levels.

## Acknowledgements

65. I together with Mihail Faca, the past chair of the Standing Committee, thank all members of Standing Committee and the many permanent observers and observers who have attended and contributed to its meetings since COP11. Your willingness to work closely with each other, to constructively address issues of importance to the Convention and constantly seek to advance the effectiveness of Ramsar in the conservation and wise use of the world's wetlands, has made our jobs as Chair both easy and enjoyable. We are honoured to have been able to serve in this role.
66. We wish to note the appreciation of the Standing Committee for the great volume and quality of the work of the Chair and members of the STRP and members of the CEPA Oversight Panel. Their skills and dedication have contributed greatly to many of the Draft Resolutions now before COP12 for consideration.
67. We would also like to thank the International Organization Partners for their continued support for the Convention's implementation, in providing technical support and advice, and in ensuring implementation of the Convention at all levels.
68. We also wish to express our deep thanks for the work of all staff of the Ramsar Secretariat. It was a great pleasure for us to see the professionalism and the devotion evident in the Secretariat.
69. We would also like to thank all Contracting Parties and other knowledgeable members of the Ramsar Community for their commitment and their involvement for the Future of our Wetlands!
70. We also wish to thank the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and the Chair of the Subgroup of Finance because during this triennium we have been a real Team, a real Executive One!
71. We would like to thank both Secretaries General for their continuous support and for sharing their knowledge and their huge expertise with us.
72. We wish all Contracting Parties and the new Standing Committee plenty of success to accomplish their mission to fight for the future of Wetlands and for the future of all of us.

Mrs. Doina Catrinoiu

Mr. Mihail Faca

Chairpersons of the Standing Committee 2012-2015