



12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Resolution XII.4

The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention

1. RECOGNIZING the value of keeping under periodic review the terms of Resolution XI.19 (2012) so as to ensure that the work of the Standing Committee continues to be delivered in as effective and cost-efficient a manner as possible;
2. RECALLING that Resolution IX.24 (2005) established a Management Working Group reporting to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties and that Resolution X.4 (2008) also established a Transition Committee of the Management Working Group;
3. RECOGNIZING that aspects of the work of these groups are also embodied in the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee itself;
4. AWARE of the intersessional Standing Committee oversight of the Secretariat, which is now conducted on its behalf between meetings of the Standing Committee by its Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of Subgroup on Finance) with the Secretary General; and
5. EXPRESSING APPRECIATION to the members of the Management Working Group for their work;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

6. EXPRESSES its gratitude to the coming Chair and members of the Standing Committee for their support and willingness to take upon them the responsibility to govern the activities and the implementations of the Convention for the coming triennium;
7. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to focus on the decisions of the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and all preceding COP decisions by:
 - a. Strengthening transparency within the work of the Convention to enhance sharing information and communication as well as facilitating the evolution of decisions, guidance and implementation of the Convention in cooperation with Parties, IOPs and stakeholders;
 - b. Improving existing management instruments between IUCN, the Standing Committee and the Secretary General to facilitate that the Secretariat effectively serves the Contracting Parties in their activities and implementation through clear, effective and understandable rules and procedures as a follow up to a Standing Committee 48 decision *“to initiate a process led by the Management Working Group to review agreements, policies, guidelines and other mechanisms that regulate the relations between and the*

division of responsibilities between the Standing Committee, the Executive Team, the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Secretary General and IUCN, including in relation to managing the Secretariat including staff management”;

- c. Developing and immediately implementing a system of reports – the first being sent by 15 September 2015, and whose frequency will be established by the Executive Team – from the Secretary General to the Executive Team, IUCN General Director and interested Standing Committee members and Observer Parties, containing information on the progress of work of the Secretariat with focus on the main priorities adopted by the COP, the Secretariats’ travelling and meetings etc., as well as the status of the core and non-core budget, and including an overview of the staff and consultancy contracts;
 - d. Overseeing the preparation of the 13th Conference of the Parties between the next host country of the Conference of Parties in 2018 and the Secretariat;
 - e. Guiding the Secretariat’s activities including its fundraising to implement the Strategic Plan, the STRP activities and the CEPA action plan, Ramsar Advisory Missions and other approved non-core budget activities;
 - f. Guiding the Secretariat’s efforts in improving the Ramsar website and related services and the use of the RSIS database;
 - g. Responding to the request from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to provide elements of advice, as appropriate, concerning the funding that may be referred to the Global Environment Facility through the CBD Conference of the Parties, and to oversee that the Secretary General transmits this advice in a timely manner to the Executive Secretary of the CBD; and
 - h. Guiding the Secretary General’s development of the strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention;
8. REQUESTS the Secretary General to develop a work plan based on these COP12 decisions to be submitted to the Standing Committee before the end of October 2015 and presented by the Secretary General at the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration;
 9. DECIDES that the current Executive Team (Romania, South Africa, and Canada) continue its tenure and continue to oversee the completion of the 360 degree evaluation process of the Secretary General and inform the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation to the Transition Committee of the Management Working Group (established under Resolution X.4) by 15 September 2015; and further REQUESTS the incoming Executive Team to explore the means of implementing the recommendations stemming from the 360 degree in advance of the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee and report on the findings, recommendations and their implementation at that meeting;
 10. DECIDES that the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee is to be held before the end of 2015 and REQUESTS that the Standing Committee develops a preliminary schedule for Standing Committee meetings for the coming triennium;
 11. ADOPTS the text in Annexes 1-4, based upon amendments that update Resolution XI.19 (2012) on the responsibilities, roles and composition of the Ramsar Standing Committee and its appended list of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties belonging to the six

Ramsar regional groups; and

12. CONFIRMS that this updated text and its annexes supersede those adopted as Resolution XI.19, which is replaced by the present Resolution.

Annex 1

The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention

1. Considering that it is useful for the effective functioning of the Ramsar Convention that Contracting Parties should have a clear process for the operation of its Standing Committee, in Resolution VII.1 (1999) the Conference of the Contracting Parties adopted guidelines on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and the regional categorization of countries under the Convention. In Resolution XI.19 (2012), the Parties amended that text and the list of countries and Contracting Parties assigned to each of the six Ramsar regions in order to bring them up to date.
2. The Ramsar Convention will have the following regional groups:
 - Africa
 - Asia
 - Oceania
 - Europe
 - Latin America and the Caribbean
 - North America
3. Contracting Parties and those countries that are eligible to join the Convention are assigned to the above regional groups, but those Contracting Parties which are geographically near to the boundaries of the allocated region, as given in Annex 2, can at their own request, based on the existence of similar natural conditions, participate within a neighbouring alternative region, while remaining a member of their geographical region, upon formal notification of this intent to the COP.¹
4. The composition of the Standing Committee will be determined by means of a proportional system, by which each regional group in paragraph 2 above will be represented by voting members in the Standing Committee according to the following criteria:
 - a. one representative for regional groups with 1 to 12 Contracting Parties;
 - b. two representatives for regional groups with 13 to 24 Contracting Parties;
 - c. three representatives for regional groups with 25 to 36 Contracting Parties;
 - d. four representatives for regional groups with 37 to 48 Contracting Parties; and
 - e. five representatives for regional groups with 49 to 60 Contracting Parties.
5. Each region can decide to appoint an Alternate Member or Members pro rata with their appointed Members with full power to represent the region, if the representative member is unable to participate in a meeting of the Standing Committee.
6. The host countries of the most recent and the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) are also voting members of the Standing Committee.
7. The regional representatives and their alternate Party representatives will be elected by the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the basis of nominations received from the regional

¹ See resolution XI.19. "Participate" is defined in this context as different from membership within the alternative region. Participation confers to the state the right to be present in meetings, to speak, to exchange information, to submit reports, to cooperate on a scientific and practical level, and to contribute to joint projects. It does not include the right to be a representative of this alternative region nor to participate in the nomination of its representative(s). It does not confer the right to vote within the alternative region.

groups established in paragraph 2 above. Initial consideration of nominations by regional groups will be undertaken at any intersessional regional COP preparatory meetings which may take place, and finalization of nominations will be made by regional groups in their regional meetings at the COP venue immediately prior to the opening of the COP, so that appointments of the new members of the Standing Committee can be made as early as possible in the COP proceedings, thus permitting the members of the new Committee to participate in Conference Bureau meetings during the COP.

8. The terms of office of the regional representatives will commence at the close of the meeting of the COP at which they have been elected and will expire at the close of the next ordinary meeting of the COP, and each Contracting Party may serve on the Standing Committee for a maximum of two consecutive terms.
9. Contracting Parties that are voting members of the Standing Committee will convey to the Secretariat, through their diplomatic channels, the name of the officer(s) in the designated national Ramsar Administrative Authority who act as their delegates on the Standing Committee, as well as the name of their substitutes, should they be needed.
10. The Contracting Party acting as host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat will continue to have the status of permanent observer in the Standing Committee. If the host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat stands for, and is elected as, a member of the Standing Committee representing its regional group, it will have voting status for that triennium in lieu of its permanent observer status.
11. The Secretariat will continue to notify all Contracting Parties of the date and agenda of meetings of the Standing Committee at least three months in advance of each meeting, so that they may, as appropriate, make arrangements to be represented at the meeting as observers.
12. Countries that are not Contracting Parties but have expressed an interest in joining the Convention may also be admitted as observers at meetings of the Standing Committee.
13. The Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel will be invited as an observer to Standing Committee meetings, as well as other experts and/or institutions that the Standing Committee may deem appropriate for assisting in its consideration of particular agenda items.
14. International organizations which are official International Organization Partners in the work of the Convention will be invited to participate as observers in meetings of the Standing Committee.
15. If an extraordinary meeting of the COP is held between two ordinary meetings, the host country will participate as an observer in the work of the Committee on matters related to the organization of the meeting, provided that the country in question is not already present in the Committee as a member or permanent observer.
16. The Contracting Parties in regional groups with one representative in the Standing Committee will use a rotation system for the nomination of the regional representative, and in regional groups with two or more representatives the selection will be made in such a manner as to achieve a balance in relation to biogeographical, geopolitical, and cultural considerations.
17. At its first meeting immediately after the close of the COP the Standing Committee will elect

its Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the members and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance established by Resolution VI.17 (1996).

18. The Standing Committee will meet normally once each year, normally at the seat of the Convention Secretariat, according to the indicative schedule provided as the Annex 4 to this Resolution. A further meeting of the Subgroups on COP and Finance may be envisaged during the year before COP, if required and if sufficient funds are available, in order to ensure the timely and efficient preparation of the COP. The costs of participation of Committee members eligible for sponsorship will be borne by the Convention.
19. Within the policies agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee will be to:
 - a. carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval and noting that the Standing Committee is not mandated either to take decisions that would normally be taken by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or to amend any decision taken by the Conference of the Parties;
 - b. make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next COP;
 - c. supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Parties, the implementation of activities by the Secretariat, the execution of the Secretariat's budget, and conduct of the Secretariat's programmes;
 - d. provide guidance and advice to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
 - e. act as Conference Bureau at COPs in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
 - f. establish subgroups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
 - g. promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - h. approve the work plan of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
 - i. adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;
 - j. review each triennium the criteria for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18 and select the laureates; and
 - k. report to the COP on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.

20. The tasks of the Regional Representatives elected to serve in the Standing Committee will be those contained in Annex 3 of this document.
21. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, shall take into consideration, within available resources, the need of having interpretation for its Subgroup meetings when it is requested by its members.
22. The Contracting Parties and the Secretariat will endeavour to secure additional voluntary funding to enable simultaneous interpretation at meetings of the Subgroup on Finance and Subgroup on COP.
23. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, will be governed, *mutatis mutandis*, by the Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Conference (see COP12 DOC.3).

Annex 2

Allocation of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties to the six Ramsar regional groups

NOTE: Names of countries in capital and bold letters denote Contracting Parties to the Convention at the time of approval of this Resolution.

AFRICA

ALGERIA

Angola

BENIN

BOTSWANA

BURKINA FASO

BURUNDI

CAMEROON

CABO VERDE

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CHAD

COMOROS

CONGO

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

DJIBOUTI

EGYPT

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Eritrea

Ethiopia

GABON

GAMBIA

GHANA

GUINEA

GUINEA-BISSAU

KENYA

LESOTHO

LIBERIA

LIBYA

MADAGASCAR

MALAWI

MALI

MAURITANIA

MAURITIUS

MOROCCO

MOZAMBIQUE

NAMIBIA

NIGER

NIGERIA

RWANDA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

SENEGAL

SEYCHELLES

SIERRA LEONE

Somalia

SOUTH AFRICA

SUDAN

SOUTH SUDAN

SWAZILAND

TOGO

TUNISIA

UGANDA

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

ZIMBABWE

ASIA

Afghanistan

BAHRAIN

BANGLADESH

BHUTAN

Brunei Darussalam

CAMBODIA

CHINA

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

INDIA

INDONESIA

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

IRAQ

JAPAN

JORDAN

KAZAKHSTAN

Kuwait

KYRGYZSTAN

LAO, PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

LEBANON

MALAYSIA

Maldives

MONGOLIA

MYANMAR

NEPAL

OMAN

PAKISTAN

PHILIPPINES

Qatar

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Saudi Arabia

Singapore

SRI LANKA

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

TAJIKISTAN

THAILAND

TURKMENISTAN

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

UZBEKISTAN

VIETNAM

YEMEN

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

Cook Islands

FIJI

KIRIBATI

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Micronesia (Federated States of)

Nauru

NEW ZEALAND

Niue

PALAU

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

SAMOA

Solomon Islands

Timor-Leste

Tonga

Tuvalu

Vanuatu

EUROPE

ALBANIA
ANDORRA
ARMENIA
AUSTRIA
AZERBAIJAN
BELARUS
BELGIUM
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
BULGARIA
CROATIA
CYPRUS
CZECH REPUBLIC
DENMARK
ESTONIA
FINLAND
FRANCE
GEORGIA
GERMANY
GREECE
Holy See
HUNGARY
ICELAND
IRELAND
ISRAEL
ITALY
LATVIA

LIECHTENSTEIN
LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG
MALTA
MOLDOVA, REPUBLIC OF
MONACO
MONTENEGRO
NETHERLANDS
NORWAY
POLAND
PORTUGAL
ROMANIA
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
San Marino
SERBIA
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
SLOVENIA
SPAIN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA
TURKEY
UKRAINE
UNITED KINGDOM

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

ARGENTINA

BAHAMAS

BARBADOS

BELIZE

BOLIVIA

BRAZIL

CHILE

COLOMBIA

COSTA RICA

CUBA

Dominica

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ECUADOR

EL SALVADOR

GRENADA

GUATEMALA

Guyana

Haiti

HONDURAS

JAMAICA

NICARAGUA

PANAMA

PARAGUAY

PERU

Saint Kitts and Nevis

SAINT LUCIA

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

SURINAME

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

URUGUAY

VENEZUELA

NORTH AMERICA

CANADA

MEXICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Annex 3

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee

The Contracting Parties that have accepted to be elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee will have the following tasks:

1. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives, according to paragraph 11 of this Resolution, and to make every effort that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
2. When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other Regional Representative(s).
3. To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one Regional Representative, they will agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each Regional Representative.
4. To solicit the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
5. To advise the Secretariat in setting the agenda of regional meetings.
6. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.
7. To provide advice as requested by the Chairperson and/or the chairs of subgroups and/or the Secretariat of the Convention.
8. In the regions concerned, to make deliberate efforts to encourage other countries to join the Convention.

Annex 4

Indicative schedule for Standing Committee intersessional meetings post-2015, and for the 2016-2018 triennium

Note. This schedule is predicated on future cycles being three calendar years, with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties in May/June of the final year of each cycle.

	General timelines, post-2015	2016-2018 triennium
First full meeting	6 months after COP	SC51 – November/December 2015
Second full meeting	20 months after COP	SC52 – February 2017
Subgroup on COP (if required)	1 year before COP	Subgroup on COP13 (if required) – June 2017
Third full meeting	5 months before COP	SC53 – January 2018
Pre-COP meeting	Immediately prior to COP, at COP venue	SC54 – June 2018