

## 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 21-29 October 2018

Ramsar COP13 Doc.18.4 Rev.1

### Draft resolution on language strategy for the Convention

1. RECALLING that, in Resolution XI.1 on *Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat*, adopted at its 11th meeting (Bucharest, 2012), the Conference of the Contracting Parties instructed the Standing Committee, with the participation of all interested Parties, to develop strategies that explore the accommodation of UN languages into the Convention, the elevation of the Convention’s visibility and stature, including *inter alia* through enhancing high-level political engagement in its work at national, regional, and global levels, the enhancement of synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other international entities including through regional initiatives, and the increased involvement in the initiatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);
2. RECALLING ALSO that, in Resolution XII.3 on *Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*, adopted at its 12th meeting (Punta del Este, 2015) the Conference of the Parties called on the Secretariat to develop a strategy and draft resolution addressing accommodation of the Arabic language into the Convention and further phased integration of existing Convention languages, which called on the Standing Committee to submit its recommendations to the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING that funding constraints have precluded the provision of a full and equal language service for the official languages of the Convention, which are English, French and Spanish;
4. CONSIDERING that the accommodation of additional languages, in particular Arabic, into the daily work of the Convention could foster the engagement of more Contracting Parties to the Convention and could assist Contracting Parties to raise awareness and improve their implementation of the Convention;
5. NOTING the expressed interest in accession to the Convention by a growing number of Arabic-speaking countries and the increasing interest in implementation of the Convention by Arabic-speaking Contracting Parties;
6. APPRECIATING the range of distinct wetland types such as wadis, sabkhas and oases in Arabic-speaking countries and their under-representation among Ramsar Sites in the network, and the presence of organizations and individuals in the region with expertise in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, whose contribution would be beneficial to the further implementation of the Convention;

7. UNDERSTANDING the range of pressing wetland issues in Arabic-speaking and other countries, in light of the increasing demand from the region's growing population and changes in water availability due to changing rainfall, unsustainable use patterns, and climate changes; and
8. APPRECIATING the work of the Standing Committee and its working group on language strategy for their work in relation to the development of a language strategy for the Convention;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. ADOPTS the Language Strategy for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands presented in Annex 1;
10. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to provide translation of the most important Ramsar information documents into their own official languages to make them publicly available on their national Ramsar websites, and ENCOURAGES them to send translated Ramsar documents of wider relevance to other Contracting Parties to the Secretariat;
11. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, with the assistance of Contracting Parties and Ramsar Regional Centres and others as appropriate, to implement a cost-effective mechanism to make translated Ramsar documents of wider relevance to other Contracting Parties available on the Convention's website; and
12. REPEALS paragraphs 6 to 11 and 26 to 31 of Resolution XII.3 on *Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* and AMENDS the title to "Enhancing the visibility and stature of the Convention, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions".

## Annex 1

### Language Strategy for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

#### Basic principle

The Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands acknowledges that the use of multiple languages in the work of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee as well as other bodies, as appropriate, and the Secretariat could:

- help to improve the implementation of the Convention by Parties;
- make the Convention more accessible to a wider public; and
- foster the interest and engagement of non-party States.

However, as for some other conventions, budgetary constraints have precluded the provision of a language service in all six official languages of the United Nations.

The Conference of the Contracting Parties agrees that the key goals for a language strategy are:

- a) to have equal language service for English, French and Spanish, being the official languages of the Convention at the start of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
- b) to aim to introduce Arabic as an official language.

When seeking to fill vacancies in the Secretariat, the Secretary General should take into account the language skills of applicants, with a view to augmenting the capacity of the Secretariat to communicate in all official languages.

The cost of translation of non-official documentation that results from projects or from externally funded activities should also be provided from voluntary non-core contributions unless the Conference of the Parties or the Standing Committee specify otherwise.

#### Timetable

13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (2018)	<p>The budget adopted for 2019-2021 includes provision for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a full equal language service in English, French and Spanish for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, Standing Committee and other bodies, as appropriate (interpretation of plenary sessions, and translation of working documents);</li><li>- new official documentation in English, French and Spanish; and</li><li>- equal treatment of these official languages on the website to the extent that resources allow.</li></ul> <p>The Contracting Parties approve the plan to make Arabic an official language at COP16, seeking its step-by-step inclusion in the budgets adopted for 2022-2024, 2025-2027 and 2028-2030.</p>
2019-2020	<p>Secretariat arranges translation into Arabic of the text of the Convention and key Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties, subject to the availability of voluntary non-core contributions.</p>
14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (2021)	<p>Subject to agreement at COP14, the budget adopted for 2022-2024 includes provision for a full language service for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee and other bodies, as appropriate, and related official documentation in English, French and Spanish, and for the Conference of the Parties in Arabic.</p>

2022-2023	Secretariat arranges translation into Arabic of remaining Resolutions that remain in effect and key high-level pages of the Ramsar website, subject to the availability of voluntary non-core contributions.
15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (2024)	Subject to agreement at COP15, the budget adopted for 2025-2027 includes provision for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a full language service for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee and other bodies, as appropriate, in English, French and Spanish;</li> <li>- a full language service for meeting of Conference of the Parties in Arabic; and</li> <li>- all new official documentation in the four official languages;</li> <li>- additional staff capacity for management of texts and documentation in Arabic.</li> </ul>
2025-2026	Secretariat arranges translation into Arabic of new official notifications (e.g. Ramsar Exchange messages), related news stories and new STRP publications, subject to the availability of voluntary non-core contributions.
16th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (2027)	Subject to agreement at COP16, the budget adopted for 2028-2030 includes provision for a full language service for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee and other bodies, as appropriate, in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and for all new official documentation, and for new website pages.