

**14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**

**“Wetlands Actions for People and Nature”
Wuhan, China and Geneva, Switzerland, 5-13 November 2022**

Ramsar COP14 Doc.18.7

Note from the Secretariat:

At the resumed session of its 59th meeting, through Decision SC59/2022-12, the Standing Committee decided to forward the draft resolution on *How to structure, write and handle Convention documents and messages* contained in document SC59/2022 Doc.24.18 to COP14 for further consideration with all the document's text in square brackets.

**Draft resolution on how to structure, write
and handle Convention documents and messages**

Submitted by Sweden

1. [RECALLING the Resolution XIV.~~xx~~ *Process for the review and consolidation of Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Parties* (also including the process for retirements);
2. RECOGNIZING the need to structure resolutions in a way that minimize the need for recurring consolidation processes, this by sorting content for a topic in separate resolutions according to the presumed lifespan of the content and the target group for the resolution;
3. RECOGNIZING the advantage of a having a section with the authors introduction and maybe others' comments in a cover note to the draft resolutions, such cover notes will not be part of the final resolution, but will provide the delegates a better understanding of the content;
4. RECOGNIZING that the lay-out for SC documents and the process on decision making for the SC can be improved;
5. RECOGNIZING the advantage of a having SC-documents with better over-views when negotiating and the potential for a reduced number of pages;
6. RECOGNIZING that need for being able to submit parts of resolution only, where such parts may be compiled by the Secretariat to a draft resolution or to be included into a consolidation process for existing resolutions by making tables more compact;
7. RECOGNIZING that the lay-out for SC documents and the process on decision making for the Standing Committee can be improved;

8. RECOGNIZING that there are a number of other ways that communication within the Convention can be improved and become more efficient and transparent;

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9. DECIDES to only use arabic numerals and latin letters while numbering resolutions, SC-documents, annexes, paragraphs and subparagraphs;
10. DECIDES that new SC-documents are to be written in the templates in annex 1, except when they are also to contain a draft resolution, then the template in annex 2 is to be used;
11. ENCOURAGES authors to follow the guidelines in the annex 3 when writing Ramsar documents;
12. DECIDES that if the drafting results in inclusion of minor suggestions or exclusions of paragraphs and other content into other draft resolutions or existing resolutions under consolidation should be listed in an annex for a possible transfer to the relevant draft resolution and that the template in annex 4 should be used;
13. DECIDES that the draft resolutions published for the COP can include a cover note that consists of the authors introduction and background description (as written in the section 2 in the document to the SC), together with the short comments from the Secretariat or other Ramsar bodies, (as published in the SC document), and potential comments from the SC during the meeting the draft was addressed;
14. AWARE of that the advice and the in-put given by the Secretariat, other Ramsar bodies or others on drafts for documents is something that authors may consider but are not obliged to follow. ALSO AWARE that the Secretariat may choose to refrain from giving an opinion;
15. ENCOURAGES authors to prepare their draft well in time for the deadline, so that the workload for the Secretariat is spread in time, but AWARE of that all authors have the right to submit their draft any time before the deadline, including the day for the deadline if needed;

Role of the Standing Committee in the preparation of draft resolutions

16. REQUESTS that the Standing Committee is to decide upon the deadline for submitting draft resolutions for each COP and the timeline and process for the review of them. Their decision must be in line with the valid Rules of Procedure at the specific occasion and take into account the following steps;
 - date for the deadline for submission of proposals for draft resolutions,
 - date for SC documents for the SC meeting where DRs are to be addressed, are to be published,
 - timeframes for Ramsar bodies and Ramsar regions to take proper actions in-line with the Rules of Procedure valid at the occasion,
 - dates for the SC where DRs are to be addressed,
 - date when DRs for the coming COP is to be published, and
 - dates for the coming COP

Role of the Secretariat in the preparation of draft resolutions and other SC-documents

17. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to inform the Contracting Parties, Ramsar bodies and IOPs on the current timetable for submitting drafts to each COP according to the valid Rules of Procedure at for the specific occasion, including the e-mail address drafts should be sent to, and a reference to this resolution;
18. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to ask for and compile what draft resolutions that are under preparation well in time for the deadline for the submission on drafts and have it published at the Ramsar website. This so that authors that may be working on similar issues or the same topics may exchange views on their work, consider merging them into one draft resolution or specify what content that shouldn't be duplicated in separate ones and to which draft resolution such content shall belong;
19. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to hold online webinars in at least all official Ramsar languages on how to write resolutions as a way of capacity-building;
20. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat, if requested by authors (preparing draft resolutions or inclusion/exclusion in other draft resolutions), to give advice on the their work, for the table on costs and benefits, high-lightening what might be needed to amend when it comes to format to be formally accepted by the Standing Committee, and give advice on structure and content in general, for ensuring the improved quality of possible decisions that are tabled for consideration at the coming COP;
21. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to suggest minor amendments to improve the quality of the document before the draft is published as a SC-document. Such amendment can be correcting spelling and grammar errors, arranging layout better or similar. No amendments that change the sense or substance of the proposals submitted are to be done. Changes are to be communicated with the author;
22. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to follow any instructions from the Standing Committee on each draft resolution or suggestion on inclusions/exclusions to be submitted to the coming COP, which may include engagement with the proposing Party and/or editing of the draft and finalize the proposals;
23. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to ensure that the publication and distribution of the draft resolutions in the official languages to the Contracting Parties are made in time according to the time frame the valid Rules of Procedure states for the specific occasion;

Retirement of older decisions and documents

24. DECIDES that the SC-decisions listed below are to be retired in full as being superseded by this resolution and be addressed according to the resolution XIV.¶¶ on "The retirement of resolutions, recommendations, documents and SC-decisions in 2022";
 - SC54 DOC 18.3 Preparation of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Process for review of draft resolutions
 - SC55 DOC 04.2 Arrangements for COP13: Process for reviewing draft resolutions
 - Decision SC55-11 (The SC took note of SC55 Doc 04.2)
 - SC58 DOC 20.4 Process for preparation and review of draft resolutions;

Improved process on decision-making for the SC

25. DECIDES that all documents prepared for the SC should include by the author suggested SC-decisions for the SC representatives to respond to, this is applicable both for SC meetings and intersessional SC-decisions;
26. DECIDES that during SC meetings, both physical and on-line, the suggested decision as well as the on-going drafting of an alternative decision, including the final decision is to be shown to everyone on the screen using the best technique available;
27. DECIDES that members of the Standing Committee can get copies of recordings from the Standing Committee meeting if they want to check what was said during the meeting, ALSO DECIDES that such copies can be used by the Standing Committee representative only and must be deleted after having been used;

On visibility of amendments in revised versions

28. CONFIRMS that Contracting Parties find it convenient to get suggested amendments visible with track changes in revised versions for comments, due to the fact that it makes it possible to do digital search for the changes in the document instead of having to do an analogue search either trying to find parts of the text that is crossed out or are added in bold, or by comparing different versions;
29. DECIDES that track-changes are to be used in all revised versions of files sent or available on-line for comments;

On distribution of messages

30. CONFIRMS that Contracting Parties find it inconvenient to get messages from anonymous e-mail accounts and to groups where participants are not visible, not knowing who's the responsible for its content and not being sure about that it has been sent to the correct target group;
31. DECIDES that all messages from the Secretariat are to have information on who took the decision on the message's content and who prepared it for that decision. This with exemption on what is published to a larger audience on the website;
32. ALSO DECIDES that all messages from the Secretariat are to have information on who the messages are addressed to, there must be a send list accompanying the message if individual receivers are not visible in the boxes for receivers in the head of the e-mail;
33. STATES that the Convention can decrease its environmental footprint and costs by stop sending messages in letters, DECIDES that the Convention is to use digital communication only, ordinary letters can be used only if there are severe difficulties using digital communication;
34. DECIDES that the Secretariat is to send their messages to the national focal point only, leaving the responsibility to the focal point to forward it to the persons concerned in each country, this with exemption on work going on in different Convention bodies, for such messages the correct send list for the particular body is to be used;

35. DECIDES that the Secretariat is to provide proper contact lists for all kinds of conventions bodies, and that such lists should include both a table of the participants and a separate part where all e-mail addresses are presented together in a way that they can be easily copied and pasted into an e-mail, ALSO DECIDES that this information is to be published at the Ramsar website; REMINDS of that according to the GDPR legislation it is possible to get a written approval from individuals that they accept to have their name, role and professional contact data published online;
36. DECIDES that Standing Committee representatives and the chairs and vice chairs of other Convention bodies can be given technical access to the Conventions database for the duration they have such responsibilities, so that they easily can make contact with different Ramsar audiences, ALSO DECIDES that Ramsar NFP can get such contact data after request;
37. DECIDES that there must be messages about all published deliveries from the STRP and that information to everyone about new or extended Ramsar sites in the world is to be published on the website only;
38. DECIDES that there is to be a section on the website that consists of information not yet decided but that are under consideration, this is only to be used to inform on future decisions of major importance, for example "The Executive Team considers if there is to be an extraordinary COP" or "The Subgroup on the coming COP considers to postpone the COP due to..";

Decision-making at the Secretariat

39. CONFIRMS that some decision making in the Conventions might be possible to delegate to Senior Advisors, for example the approval of RIS. DECIDES that the Secretariat is to prepare a document on how right to make decisions on the behalf of the Conventions is delegated;
40. ALSO DECIDES that this document is to be presented to the Standing Committee at the SC meeting approximately one year after the COP14 for comments and if possible, for approval;

Instructions for the Secretariat

41. INSTRUCES the Secretariat to in advance ask for digital copies of credentials for COPs and Extraordinary COPs, screen them and if there are questions on if a credential fulfil the conditions or not, take contact with the country it concerns so that a correct credential can be made and submitted, so that delegates have everything in correct order before the meeting and that the workload of the Credential Committee is reduced;
42. INSTRUCES the Secretariat to have this resolution fully implemented before 1 March 2023;]

[Annex 1 Guidance on preparation of submissions for draft resolutions

Guidance in general

Overall content in the draft resolution

1. In order to avoid that a topic might have different target groups for different content, consider if it might be useful to make more than one resolution and divide the content after target groups, (e.g. having content that relates to Convention governance in one resolution and content that is for activities on the national level in another), in this way it will be easier to collect all decisions on governance;
2. In order to avoid a need for constant consolidation processes for a resolution, consider if it might be useful to make more than one resolution for the topic of interest, separating the content according to possible lifespan, (e.g. having content that is basic and long-lived in one resolution and content that is valid until the next COP in a short-lived resolution);
3. In order not to bog down a new resolution with information on what old decisions that might be retired, use the annex for suggested inclusion/exclusion related to other draft resolutions so that such information can be compiled into the resolutions on retirement and/or consolidation at the coming COP;
4. In order to have all kinds of content belonging to the most suitable draft resolution, use the annex for suggested inclusion/exclusion for content that relates to the draft under preparation but would be better suited in another draft resolution, e.g. a paragraph on financial support for a new working group is suggested to be in the DR on Financial and budgetary matters instead of being presented in the DR about the issue it is originated from;

Length of the resolution

7. Keep the draft proposal short. In order to save translation costs, reading time and to get a better focus in the resolutions and avoid unnecessary details the authors are encouraged to keep the proposals for draft resolutions short;

Language and expressions

8. Use short sentences and a simple language, to foster the greatest understanding, also remembering that not all readers have any of the Ramsar official languages as their mother tongue;
9. Use within the Ramsar sphere commonly used acronyms instead of long names and expressions;
10. Use language and expressions that will be relevant long after the COP at which it is agreed;
 - avoid citing present documents, instead make general reference to the ones that are valid in the future, for example valid Rules of Procedure for each occasion a process is to be done,

- avoid present formal names of Ramsar bodies, organisations etc, instead they can be referred to in a more general way, for example the Ramsar bodies engaged in science or CEPA etc,
 - avoid defining exactly what format, methods, technical tools etc that should be used. They might soon be outdated. Write in a way that welcome progress and technical development and prescribes the best available technique that is commonly used for each occasion;
11. Use specific descriptions of timing, e.g. dates/years, or time frames that refer to specific Ramsar meetings if such events have already taken place. Avoid word and expressions like today, for now and at present;
 12. When writing about things that shall take place in the future, consider the fact that things may not occur as thought of when writing the text. For example, can a triennium be prolonged, and the SC can decide to meet less or more often than normally expected. When writing about a program or plan, it may be better to use a timeframe related to Ramsar events e.g. COP14-COP16, instead of using specific years it should be valid. The same might be applied for deadlines for deliveries from Ramsar bodies to the SC. Don't use the numbering for SC meetings and to detailed deadlines for sub-deliveries. Better to write that there is to be a continuously reporting to the SC on progress and that the results are to be finalised in time for the decided time schedule for, e.g the COP15;

Illustration and tables

13. Text describing processes, organisation etc can benefit from being accompanied by pictures, process schemes, organogram, etc preferable in an annex;
14. Try to present tables in a way that it makes it easier for the reader to get a good overview of its content. The following examples may increase the possibility to get better overview by making the table more compact and presented on less pages, choose what may be applicable:
 - Use laying format for the pages concerned, if there are many columns and/or lots of text to be included to be presented,
 - Don't add extra rows to get more space in the table,
 - The column that have the most text should be the broadest, not the ones with the longest headline. Adopt column width to the length of the content. Long headlines for columns can be shortened or explained close to the table,
 - Use commonly used acronyms within the Ramsar sphere instead of long words/expressions,
 - Sometimes the content on two columns can be combined if one of the columns have limited info only and that can be written in bold or italic to differ it from the other information in the common new column;

Guidance for each section in the template

Section 1

15. The Section 1 should at least include an invitation to the Standing Committee to review and forward the draft resolution for consideration at COP14 and a suggested decision, but can also include other required actions;

Section 2

16. The Section 2 should at least include a short text on background information to inform the Standing Committee before their decision;
17. Sometimes a more thorough background information can be needed. This may include why the author have chosen to structure the resolution as presented. It may also include annexes if for example the author would like to inform about how the author have search for older decisions to consider and if and how older decisions found have been integrated into the draft including reasons for why not, as well as other basic data available for the reader;
18. The table indicating the future resolutions financial impact should include the costs for the Conventions core or non-core budgets. Costs are to be written in Swiss francs (CHF) and are to be specified as one-off costs or recurrent costs per year or per triennium. Potential decrease of present cost may be described in words without estimation in CHF. It may also include information on how it may affect other budgets, e.g. the Contracting Parties, in general;

Section 3

19. The rationale for the proposed draft resolution should be made explicit within the preambular paragraphs. The activities asked for should be within the Operational paragraphs;
20. All paragraphs of a draft resolution, including preambular and operative paragraphs, should be numbered consecutively 1, 2, 3, etc., starting with the first paragraph of the preamble. Subparagraphs should be ordered in alphabetical order a), b), c), etc. But parts just listing a few numbers of information lines may be presented in bullets-point instead. Avoid having too many sublevels;
21. Preambular paragraphs should present brief background information necessary to contextualize the actions proposed for agreement by the Contracting Parties in the operative paragraphs. Not every paragraph in the operational part need to be justified in the preamble, just the content of the operational part in general. These paragraphs must begin with a verb in the form of a participle or an adjective in capital letters (e.g. "CONCERNED", "ALSO HAVING CONSIDERED", "RECOGNIZING" or "ACKNOWLEDGING");
22. Operative paragraphs contain the actions that the Contracting Parties recommend or agree to take. These paragraphs begin with an action verb in capital letters (e.g. "APPROVES", "CALLS UPON", "DECIDES", "INVITES", "INSTRUCTS", "NOTES", "REQUESTS" or "URGES");
23. The verb used should correspond to the role of the body called to act. For example, it is appropriate: to encourage, call upon or urge Contracting Parties to act; to request an action of STRP or the SC; to instruct the Secretariat, and to invite organisations and others that do not answer to the Ramsar Convention;
24. The operational part may be divided in sub-parts using different headlines and having the paragraphs sorted accordingly, (e.g. basic information, instructions for the Secretariat), rationale for the proposed draft resolution should be made explicit within the preambular paragraphs;

25. There must be a paragraph on the status of the annexes to the draft resolution, it may be approved, endorsed or acknowledged etc by the COP. It may also be decided that the content in the annex have to be applied;
26. Any tables or figures should be titled as such and numbered consecutively, e.g. Figure 2: Process for identifying key ecosystem services.

Possible sub-heading on Basic information on the resolution and other resolutions related to it

27. Include a statement on how long the resolution is supposed to last (e.g. until COP15 or until it is replaced) and if possible to foresee when it is to be retired suggest a paragraph with a decision that retires it and the when, (e.g. when the COP15 is ended);
28. Include short information on how older decisions have been addresses, e.g. if retirement or consolidation processes have been made. Include a decision on that the new resolution have precedence if other still valid older decisions exist but haven't been found for the retirement process;

Annexes

29. An annex may provide information that is necessary in order to understand what is being agreed in the resolution, e.g., budget tables, terms of reference, content in plans, lists of countries, or in some instances examples of best practices or other technical information, that is otherwise not appropriate or possible to reflect in prose within the operational part. The annex may also include links to other documents and background information that is to be kept for the future;
30. Annexes are numbered: Annex 1, Annex 2, etc., following the order in which they are referred to in the draft resolution. Each annex should start on a new page;
31. Paragraphs should be numbered consecutively 1,2 3, etc. Subparagraphs should be marked a), b), c) etc. Bullet points may be used for short lists of texts, that are not in need to be referred to, or can easily be referred to in another way;]

**[Annex 2
Template for SC Documents in general, (applied as appropriate)**

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
xxth Meeting of the Standing Committee
Town, Country, Date-Date Month, Year

SCxx Doc.xx.xx

Title

Written by (Contracting Party, Ramsar body, another actor):

Section 1. The Standing Committee is invited to

1. Note...;
1. Review;
1. Provide guidance;
1. Decide on by the author to this document suggested, decisions drafted below review;

The Author of this document suggests the SC makes the following decisions

- The SCxx decides that the Draft resolution in this document is to be forwarded to the COP
 - The SCxx decides that the Draft resolution in this document is to be adopted by the SC and submitted to the COP,
 - The SCxx decides that the suggested inclusions/exclusions are useful and instructs the Secretariat to add them in a proper way to the draft resolutions suggested in SC DOC xx.xx Annex 4,
-

Section 2. Introduction and background

1. x;

2. x;
3. x;
4. x;

**Section 3. The main document or text for consideration by the SC
(Report, Budget, Work plan/programme, Agenda or another kind of document)**

1. x;
2. x;
3. x;

Possible annexes

[Annex 3

Template for the SC Documents including a draft resolution, (applied as appropriate)

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
xxth Meeting of the Standing Committee
Town, Country, Date-Date Month, Year

SCxx Doc.xx.xx

Title

Added comments by Secretariat or other Convention body:

Submitted to the SC to be forwarded to the COP by (Contracting Party):

Submitted to the SC to be forwarded to the COP by (organisation/individuals sponsored by CP):

Submitted to the SC for their review, adoption, and submission to the COP (Ramsar body):

Section 1. The Standing Committee is invited to...

1. review the draft resolution in section 3 and forward it to the coming COP, in line with the current Rules of Procedure;
2. review the suggested inclusions/exclusions listed in section 4, that will affect other draft resolutions in Section 4, and instruct the Secretariat to integrate them properly in other drafts before publishing the draft resolutions;
3. review the introduction to the draft resolution in section 2 and forward it as a cover note to the draft resolution and maybe add comments by the SC in the cover note; all in line with the valid Rules of Procedure on the occasion;
4. decide on the suggested decisions described below
5. any other actions requested by the SC, decide on suggested decisions described below;

The Author of this document suggests the SC makes the following decisions

- The SCxx decides that the Draft resolution in this document is to be forwarded to the COP
- The SCxx decides that the Draft resolution in this document is to be adopted by the SC and submitted to the COP,

- The SCxx decides that the suggested inclusions/exclusions are useful and instructs the Secretariat to add them in a proper way to the draft resolutions suggested in SC DOC xx.xx Annex 4,
- The SCxx decides to...

Section 2. Introduction and back-ground

(This introduction and back-ground will accompany the draft resolution as the author's cover notes. Any comments from the SC might be added after the SC meeting).

1. x;
2. x;
3. x;

Financial implications of implementation of the future resolution if accepted as the draft suggests

Parts of resolution	Action	One-off costs, re-current costs and/or benefits

Possible annexes

Section 3. Draft resolution xx.xx

Submitted by (Contracting Party):

Submitted by (organisation/individuals sponsored by Contracting Party)

Submitted by the SC

1. RECALLING...;
2. ALSO RECALLING...;
3. FURTHER RECALLING...;
4. AWARE of ...:
 - a. This...;

- b. That...; and
 - c. The other...:
- 5. ACKNOWLEDGING...; and
 - 6. CONCERNED that...;

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(Other headlines in italic may be added)

Basic information on the resolution and other resolutions related to it

- 2. STATES that;
- 3. DECIDES that this resolution will be retired at COPxx.

About xx in general

- 4. REQUESTS...;
- 9. ENCOURAGES...;
- 10. ALSO ENCOURAGES ...;
- 11. URGES ...; and
- 12. CALLS ON
- 13. INVITES

Instruction for the Secretariat

Annexes to the resolution

]

[Annex 4

Template for annexes about inclusion or exclusion of paragraphs and similar in other decisions (*examples in italic*)

If accepted by the SC the content in these tables will be reflected in other draft resolutions that are under preparations for the coming COP. Either in a standard draft resolution or in a one that addresses suggested consolidation of older resolutions.

1. Paragraphs or other content to include in other draft resolutions for the coming COP

Row No.	Paragraphs or other content to include in another draft resolution	Draft resolution to include the paragraphs /content in	Suitable part of the draft resolution to include the paragraphs /content in	Reason to inclusion
1	<i>to retire the following resolutions: x, x and x.</i>	<i>This coming COP's DR on retiring old decisions</i>	<i>Annex with list on resolutions to be retired</i>	<i>Better to compile all suggested retirements of old decisions in a single draft resolution where the content is addressed in the same way, and where the resolutions is retired after the activities have been executed.</i>
2	<i>DECIDES to allocate funds, at least xx CHF for the working group on...</i>	<i>This coming COP's DR on financial and budgetary matters.</i>	<i>Operational part and add amount and budget line in the annexes of the budget</i>	<i>Better to collect all financial matters in the same draft resolution.</i>
3				

2. Paragraphs or other content to include in other draft resolutions addressing consolidation at the coming COP or later on

Row No.	Paragraphs or other content to include in draft resolution on consolidation	Draft resolution on consolidation to include the paragraphs /content in	Suitable part of the draft resolution to include the paragraphs /content in	Reason to inclusion
1	<i>INVITES x, x and x to co-operate on x.</i>	The DR on consolidation of resolutions about Partnerships and synergies	<i>In the Operational Part</i>	<i>It would be better to have the suggested paragraph among others on co-operation.</i>

2				
3				

3. Paragraphs or other content to exclude from other draft resolutions if written there

Row No.	Paragraphs or other content to exclude elsewhere somehow	Draft resolution not in need of this information	Possible part of draft resolution to exclude this paragraphs /content	Reason for this change
1	<i>Instruction or encouragements to the Secretariat on how to act when it comes to the preparatory work on draft resolution</i>	<i>The one on "Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention"</i>	<i>Part with instruction for the Secretariat</i>	<i>All text on producing new document are now included in this the resolution on DR.</i>
2				

4. Paragraphs or other content to exclude from other resolutions while subject for a consolidation process

Row No.	Paragraphs or other content to exclude from draft resolution on consolidation	Resolution not in need of this information in the future	Possible part of resolution to exclude this paragraphs /content	Reason for this change
1	<i>Para ٥٥-٥٥ on that RRI's are to do activities in a certain region in the operational part.</i>	<i>٥٥.٥٥ and ٥٥.٥٥</i>	<i>Table including paras that can be retired.</i>	<i>Not necessary to mention what RRI's are to do in every resolution, the DR ٥٥:٥٥ is already addressing this on a general level.</i>
2				

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