

**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.8

## **Report of the Chair of the Standing Committee**

### Introduction

1. The Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands 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its members are governed by [Resolution VII.1](#) (1999) as amended by [Resolution XI.19](#) (2012), which was itself superseded by [Resolution XIII.4](#) (2018). In all matters not specified in Resolution VII.1, the rules of procedure for meetings of the Standing Committee are governed *mutatis mutandis* by the [Rules of Procedure for the Conference of the Contracting Parties](#).
2. At its 13th meeting (COP13, Dubai, 2018), the Conference of the Contracting Parties elected the new regional members of the Standing Committee to oversee Convention matters during the triennium until the following COP. At its first meeting after COP13, the Standing Committee elected the United Arab Emirates as its Chair, Sweden as Vice-Chair and Mexico as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance. The United Arab Emirates has been represented in the Chair by H.E. Mohamed Al Afkham.
3. The present composition of the Standing Committee reflects the proportional system of regional representation mandated by Resolution XIII.4, as outlined below:

**Africa:** Algeria, Chad, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia;

**Asia:** Bhutan, Japan, Oman;

**Europe:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;

**Latin America and the Caribbean:** Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Uruguay;

**North America:** Mexico;

**Oceania:** Australia.

The COP13 host country, the United Arab Emirates, and the COP14 host country, China, are also members.

4. Switzerland (as the host country of the Convention Secretariat) participates as a permanent observer. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and six official International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, International Union for Conservation of Nature, International Water Management Institute, Wetlands International, WWF International and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) are invited to participate as observers in the Standing Committee meetings.

5. Countries that are not Contracting Parties, but that have expressed an interest in acceding to the Convention, as well as other experts 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. The Standing Committee has been entrusted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties with the supervision of matters ongoing during the triennium. These include financial and budgetary matters, the Convention Strategic Plan for 2016-2024, increasing the visibility of the Convention, the Ramsar Regional Initiatives and the preparation of COP14, as well as consideration of any other relevant matters raised by members and observers.
7. Notice of each meeting of the Standing Committee was distributed to all Contracting Parties through a diplomatic note, and Parties that are not members of the Committee have been invited to attend in an observer capacity. The Secretariat prepared documentation to be considered at each Standing Committee meeting in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. The documents were published on the Convention website.
8. The reports and decisions of each Standing Committee meeting have been distributed to all Contracting Parties by diplomatic notes in the three official languages of the Convention, and have also been published on the [Convention website](#).
9. The present report covers the period from November 2018 (the close of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties) to the end of July 2022.
10. The Standing Committee met eight times during this period:
  - 56th meeting: immediately after the close of COP13 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 29 October 2018;
  - 57th meeting: 24-28 June 2019; Gland, Switzerland;
  - 58th meeting: 23 and 25 June 2020; online;
  - 59th meeting (first session): 21-25 June 2021; online;
  - 59th meeting (resumed session): 15 November 2021; online;
  - 59th meeting (resumed session): 23-27 May 2022; Gland, Switzerland;
  - 59th meeting (additional session): 21 June; online;
  - Closed session: 19 July 2022; online.

Meeting reports and decisions for Standing Committee meetings are available at:  
<https://www.ramsar.org/about/current-standing-committee-2018-2022-meetings>.

11. A significant implication of the COVID-19 pandemic was the need to postpone COP14 to November 2022 and the need to convene a virtual extraordinary COP (ExCOP3) to approve new dates for the COP and adopt a budget for the continued operation of the Convention for 2022. ExCOP3 was held from 25 October to 4 November 2021 for the purpose of taking these time-critical decisions in view of the impossibility of COP14 taking place physically in November 2021 as originally planned. During ExCOP3, Contracting Parties agreed to postpone COP14 until November 2022 and approved a core budget for 2022.

The report and decisions of ExCOP3 are available here:  
<https://www.ramsar.org/document/report-of-the-third-extraordinary-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-contracting-parties>.

12. The Management Working Group of the Standing Committee met seven times during the reporting period to discuss issues within its competence and to report its recommendations to the Standing Committee meeting in plenary. Contracting Party members of the Management Working Group participated in the selection process for the next Secretary General.
13. Advancing the work of the governing and subsidiary bodies during the period of this report has been challenging, owing to COVID and the difficulties in meeting face-to-face. When meetings were unable to take place physically, Contracting Parties, with the support of the Secretariat, were able to advance work and take time-critical decisions through virtual meetings, including SC58, the first session of SC59 and several intersessional meetings. The COVID-19 pandemic has required new ways of working and the Convention has adapted. Despite the challenges, the essential actions continued to be taken by both Contracting Parties and the Secretariat to implement the decisions taken at COP13, as well as at SC57, SC58 and SC59, adapting to the context of the new working environment.
14. Despite the challenges of meeting face-to-face, Contracting Parties have been active in participating online. During SC58, 66 participants from 34 Contracting Parties participated virtually. During the first meeting of SC59, 97 participants from 43 Contracting Parties and 27 observers participated virtually. 287 delegates from 120 Contracting Parties participated virtually in ExCOP3.
15. During this period, the Chair and the Executive Team provided guidance to the Secretariat with regard to the process to implement Resolution XIII.1 on the declaration of World Wetlands Day by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by encouraging Parties to co-sponsor and support this effort.
16. Additionally, the Chair and the Executive Team provided advice on the issues related to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel. Regular contact was maintained with the Secretary General to advise on the appointment of the new Chair of the STRP and the cancellation of the Panel's 23rd meeting (STRP23).
17. The Chair engaged in preparations for the Consultative Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework ("Bern II") held in December 2020, in which representatives of Contracting Parties participated on behalf of the Convention on Wetlands.

#### Chair's remarks

18. During this period, the second term of Secretary General Martha Rojas Urrego came to an end. The Standing Committee selected the next Secretary General of the Convention, Dr Musonda Mumba, as recommended by the Selection Committee by unanimous accord. I would like to thank the Selection Committee for their efficient and effective work in selecting our new Secretary General. Additionally, I would like to extend my deep thanks and appreciation to Martha for her support and assistance to me in my role.
19. As Chair of the Standing Committee, I would like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee, as well as the observers, other Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners, the STRP, the members of the Secretariat and Secretary General Martha Rojas Urrego. The active commitment of all, and the constructive attitude to the work of the Convention, have contributed significantly to the progress of our tasks.

20. I want to acknowledge the work and dedication of those who, in the States that are party to the Convention, are the fundamental actors for the protection and sustainable use of wetlands, many of them heroes who often face adversity in their day-to-day work. In each of our countries, they make the Convention a reality, and we owe them all our recognition.
21. Finally, I would like to thank and extend appreciation to my colleagues on the Executive Team, Vice-Chair Jenny Lonnstad of Sweden and Raül Vargas of Mexico as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, with whom I worked side-by-side during the sessions of the Standing Committee, and particularly between its meetings.
22. I wish the new Standing Committee and all the Contracting Parties great success in fulfilling our mission in the new period that is now beginning.

H.E. Mohamed Al Afkham  
Chair of the Standing Committee 2018-2022