



"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"
**7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999**

Agenda item XIX

Date and Venue of the Next Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Action requested: This issue will come up for discussion at the last Plenary Session of COP7 on Tuesday 18 May, even though it should be the subject of informal consultations previous to that. The Conference should take a decision on the venue of COP8 on the basis of invitations that may have been received by then from Contracting Parties to host the meeting.

1. The proposed Rules of Procedure contained in document Ramsar COP7 DOC. 2, include the following section concerning the place of the meetings of the COP:

PLACE OF MEETINGS

Rule 3

1. The meeting of the Conference of the Parties shall take place in the country chosen by the previous Conference of the Parties on the basis of a formal invitation that should have been issued to this effect by the Head of State or Government or the Cabinet or the Minister of Foreign Affairs of that country. If more than one Party issues an invitation to host the next meeting, and two or more invitations are maintained after informal consultations, the meeting shall decide on the venue of the next meeting by secret ballot.
2. If no invitation has been received, the meeting shall be held in the country where the Bureau has its seat, unless other appropriate arrangements are made by the Bureau and accepted by the Standing Committee.
2. If this rule was to be adopted under Agenda item IV of COP7, it would apply when the meeting deals with Agenda item XIX: Date and venue of the next Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, at the last Plenary Session. Thus, Contracting Parties wishing to host COP8 should consider insuring that their invitation is issued under the signature of the appropriate authority, as would be required by the Rules of Procedure.

3. While India indicated at the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties that it would maintain its invitation to host a meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and Spain informed the Standing Committee at its 21st Meeting in October 1998 that the Spanish Government was seriously considering extending an invitation to host COP8, by the time of distribution of documents on 5 February 1999 the Ramsar Bureau has not yet received written confirmation of invitations to host COP8. It would be advantageous to inform Contracting Parties in advance of the meeting of any such invitation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the rules do not prevent Contracting Parties from extending such an invitation at the very last moment, at the Conference itself.
4. On the occasion of COP6, the Ramsar Bureau distributed document INFO 6.5 entitled "General Requirements for and Indicative Costs of Holding an Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention". This document is not being distributed again with the COP7 documentation. An updated version can be obtained upon request from the Ramsar Bureau or consulted on the Ramsar Web site under the section "COP7".
5. An important issue to be taken into account by Contracting Parties wishing to host COP8 is the fact that, contrary to the situation in most other conventions, the Ramsar Bureau budget does not include an allocation to cover the expenses incurred by the secretariat in preparing and servicing the meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Thus, if COP7 does not take a decision to include these costs in the budget for the next triennium, they would have to be covered by the host country of COP8, in addition to meeting the costs of the facilities that have to be provided at the venue to cater for a meeting that would have between 1500 and 2000 participants.
6. The Ramsar Bureau's costs in relation to the COP include the following: a) preparation, translation and distribution of documents prior to the Conference; b) hiring the professional teams of interpreters and translators that provide services during the Conference; c) the transportation and subsistence allowance cost of the Ramsar Bureau staff to the site of the Conference; and d) the production, translation, printing and distribution of the Conference proceedings. These costs are calculated at around SFR 500,000.
7. Local costs incurred by the host government are difficult to predict because all depend upon the facilities that the government may have at its disposal free of charge or at reduced prices, and the local costs of products and services, including personnel.
8. Costa Rica has been the first developing country that has offered to host the COP. This experience has shown that, while the country has benefited from the generous support of some Contracting Parties and organizations, it has not been easy for the Government to obtain the necessary support, in particular in relation to the obligation to cover the costs incurred by the Ramsar Bureau in Switzerland, as described in paragraph 6 above.