

Minutes of the preparatory meeting for European Ramsar Parties (Online – 23 September 2021 – 14:00-17:00 UTC+2 Geneva time)

Participating Parties (32): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Ukraine.

Missing Parties (16): Andorra, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Moldova.

3rd Extraordinary Meeting of the COP of the Convention on Wetlands Online 25-29 October 2021

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Slovenia (Gordana Beltram) opens the preparatory meeting and welcomes European Ramsar Parties. The purpose of this preparatory meeting is to discuss the upcoming 3rd Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and ensure Parties understand how the Extraordinary COP will be organized and run, what business will be conducted and to provide an opportunity to discuss the two Draft Resolutions to be considered.
- 1.2 The Secretary General (Martha Rojas Urrego) welcomes the Parties and provides an overview of the ongoing work by Standing Committee, its working groups, STRP and the Secretariat support to these activities and the Parties. She notes with satisfaction that the United Nations General Assembly, in its session of 30 August 2021, included in the UN List of International Days and Weeks *2 February World Wetlands Day* that is celebrated by Ramsar Parties since many years.

2. Approving the Agenda

- 2.1 The Parties elect Slovenia (Gordana Beltram) to chair this European meeting to prepare for the Extraordinary COP in October 2021.
- 2.2 They add a closed session for the Parties, without Secretariat staff, to the meeting Agenda.
- 2.3 The chair asks for adoption of the minutes of the European information meeting that took place online on 1 July 2021. The minutes are adopted with a clarification re the first theme of chapter 5.1 Reflections on possible ways how to modernize the Convention (after 50 years) and make it more attractive for Parties. The modified text (in *italics*) concerns the first sentence:

Change the Ramsar Sites approach: *Parties should not only focus on increasing the number of RS (Target 6 of the Strategic Plan), but also put in parallel more focus on how best to manage and maintain existing RS (Targets 5 and 7 of the Strategic Plan). RS should represent in reality, not only on paper, the best-managed wetland landscapes, evidenced by global parameters to measure their management effectiveness.*

3. Outline of the sessions of the 3rd Extraordinary Meeting of the COP

- 3.1 The Secretariat (Tobias Salathé) briefly introduces the Extraordinary COP that will meet in **two online sessions on Monday 25 October 2021 and Thursday 28 October**. Should all business not be conducted on the Thursday, Parties will meet again on Friday 29 October.

- 3.2 The online sessions are **strictly limited to three hours**: 13:00–16:00 CEST Geneva time (UTC+2) with interpretation in English, French and Spanish (cf. working programme **ExCOP3 Doc.3.2**).
- 3.3 The reason for the two-day break is to allow for compliance with Rule 18 (Rules of Procedure **ExCOP3 Doc.4.1**), which allows Parties to submit their Credentials up to 48 hours after the opening of the meeting.
- 3.4 **All Documents** for the Extraordinary COP can be downloaded from the event page of the Convention website: <https://www.ramsar.org/event/extraordinary-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-contracting-parties-2021>.
- 3.5 The Bureau of the Extraordinary COP will be composed of the officers elected at COP13 to serve until COP14: President United Arab Emirates (Mohamed Al Afkham), Vice-Presidents Finland (Kristiina Niikonen) and Uganda (Lucy Iyango), in accordance with Rule 21.
- 3.6 The *first session* on **Monday 25 October** will elect its officers, adopt the agenda, work programme and Rules of Procedure for the Extraordinary COP, appoint its Credentials Committee, admit observers, and start to consider Draft Resolutions.
- 3.7 The *second session* on **Thursday 28 October** will receive and adopt the report of the Credentials Committee, continue the considerations of the Draft Resolutions, and finally adopt the Resolutions and the report of the Extraordinary COP.

4. Credentials are needed by all Parties to reach a quorum to adopt Resolutions

- 4.1 It is crucial **that all Parties participate** in the Extraordinary COP. The COP requires a quorum of two thirds of all Parties (114 Parties) to take decisions, according to Rules 29 and 39.
- 4.2 European Standing Committee members (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sweden, United Kingdom) are encouraged to actively reach and contact all Parties they are representing to ensure full participation in all sessions of the COP.
- 4.3 The Extraordinary COP will establish a **Credentials Committee** to review the credentials of each Party. The European Parties nominate Austria (Gerhard Bachner) as their representative to the Credentials Committee.
- 4.4 Only Parties that have submitted **Credentials** for their participating delegates count for reaching the necessary quorum of the Extraordinary COP.
- 4.5 Parties have to submit their Credentials in accordance with Rule 18 (**ExCOP3 Doc.4.1**). **Obtaining Credentials may take substantial time**, because they need to be signed either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or his/her equivalent, and be submitted in one of the three Convention languages. They must bear the name and position of the person who signs the credentials as well as the signature and full address of the appropriate authority.
- 4.6 Parties have to **submit their Credentials by email** to: excop@ramsar.org **as soon as possible** (good-quality scans, or letters with certified electronic signature). This allows the Secretariat to identify possible issues at an early stage and the formal review of the Credentials by the Credentials Committee in time prior to the opening of second session of the COP on 28 October.

5. Preregistration is required for the Extraordinary Meeting of the COP

- 5.1 *Kudo* will be the online platform used for the COP. Most Parties are familiar with the platform from the online Standing Committee meetings 58 and 59.

- 5.2 Only **registered participants** will receive a **link** ahead of the meeting to be used to connect at the beginning of each COP session.
- 5.3 Registered participants are encouraged to test their equipment in advance during a test session (dates will be announced). Before and during the Meeting, dedicated operators from *Kudo* will be available to help with any technical issue. A specific chat window will allow registered participants to communicate directly with them and solve any problem.
- 5.4 If connection is not possible, participants can write to kudo@ramsar.org to reach the Secretariat for assistance. *Kudo* works on computers, notebooks and mobile phones, and simultaneous interpretation between English, French and Spanish will be provided.
- 5.5 Participants need to **register** not later than *13 October 2021*:
<https://contacts.ramsar.org/register-excop>.
- 5.6 For registration, an official **nomination letter** signed by the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be uploaded indicating the names of the representatives and the head of the delegation of the Party.

6. Discussion of the two Draft Resolutions submitted to the Extraordinary COP

- 6.1 **New dates for COP14:** The Secretariat (Jay Aldous) introduces document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.1* (attached below), i.e. the Draft Resolution to approve the new dates for COP14 of 21-29 November 2022 in Wuhan, China. The new dates were proposed by the host country, and subsequently these dates were approved by Standing Committee (Decision SC59-10) to be submitted to the COP for approval. The Secretariat continues to monitor the Covid-19 situation and possible travel restrictions in place, as well how other global conventions react to such challenges (notably UNCBD COP15 in Kunming, China, in April 2022).
- 6.2 **Convention budget for 2022:** The Secretariat (Sladjana Stankovic) introduces document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.2* (attached below), i.e. the Draft Resolution on financial and budgetary matters for approval of a one-year, 2022 core budget for the Convention. The proposed budget has been critically reviewed and improved by the Subgroup on Finance and subsequently approved by Standing Committee in June 2021 (Decision SC59-31) to be submitted to the COP for approval. This budget is based on a 0% increase as compared to the 2019-2021 triennium.
- 6.3 The proposed budget for 2022 will be presented during the first COP session on 25 October. The budget column '*Budget 2022 for approval by Extraordinary COP*' reflects a 0% increase compared to the triennium 2019-2021. This amount will need to be covered by the annual contributions of the Parties (cf. Annex 2 of Resolution XIII.2), similar to the years 2019-2021, covered by the budget approved with Resolution XIII.2 Financial and budgetary matters.
- 6.4 The Standing Committee authorized the use of unspent moneys from the budget 2020 to be earmarked for specific expenditures in 2022. These additional amounts are listed in the budget column '*SC59 authorized use of 2020 budget savings*'. The same approach was applied to the 2019-2021 triennium budget approved by COP13 (Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 15), while the 2022 budget includes an additional allocation for the increase in provision for outstanding contributions.
- 6.5 Any variations in travel budget lines comparing to the COP13 approved budgets are due to the transfer of the resources between the budget lines to reflect the actual needs in accordance with the Workplan for the Secretariat, while the overall travel budget remains unchanged. These changes are done in line with the Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 28 and they are reviewed by the Subgroup of Finance approved by the Standing Committee (Decision SC59-27). In the

course of 2022 the implementation of the budget will be done in accordance with the Covid-19 situation.

- 6.6 The annual contributions for 2022 will be assessed in accordance with the most recent scale of assessments for the contributions to the UN budget, as per Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 29. It is expected that the new scale of assessment for the years 2022-2024 will be released towards the end of 2021.
- 6.7 The Secretariat will send invoices to the Parties in January 2022 for their 2022 contributions. However, Parties wishing to pay earlier can obtain a provisional invoice already in 2021 before the UN assessment will be known.
- 6.8 The Standing Committee applied a cautionary approach when adopting the proposed budget for 2022, due to the unforeseeable evolution of the Covid-19 situation. The Standing Committee shall decide on any future allocations of budget savings and as well decide if a biennium 2023-2024 or a triennium budget 2023-2025 shall be submitted to COP14 for approval.
- 6.9 To cope with the future evolution of the pandemic situation, the Draft Resolution proposes that Standing Committee will have the authority to approve relevant budgetary matters until COP14 will take further decisions (paragraph 11 of the Draft Resolution ExCOP3 Doc. 8.2).
- 6.10 **Regional consultations during the Extraordinary COP:** If European Parties wish to consult among themselves prior to the sessions of the Extraordinary COP (25-28 October 2021), the Secretariat is happy to organise online meetings on request.

7. Unpaid annual contributions and the requirement for budget provisions

- 7.1 The Secretariat (Sladjana Stankovic) would like to share the importance of regular payment of annual contributions. In addition to creating a gap in the regular budget when annual contributions are not made, there is a need to put aside funds to manage risks of non-payment, as required by the auditors. Given recent changes in the methodology for the calculation of these funds, also known as provisions, when contributions are not paid for more than 4 years the provisions increase substantially. This means that more money needs to be taken out from the regular budget of the Convention to cover the provisions. Thus, without the regular payment of all annual contributions, the budget of the Convention could be in shortfall and affect the support provided to the Parties, as well operations for Convention
- 7.2 She explains that in accordance with Decision SC57-39 taken by the Standing Committee, the provision for non-collection of outstanding annual contributions has been calculated since 2019 in accordance with the method proposed by the external auditor. As for prior years, a provision of 20% is applied on contributions not received within two years, 60% on contributions not received within three years, and 80% on contributions not received within four years. In order to fully comply with Swiss law, with the objective of incorporating the notion of economic risk resulting from delayed payment by some Parties over many years, a provision of 100% is applied on all outstanding balances of Parties which had not made a payment to cover for outstanding contributions for more than four years at the time when the provision is calculated.
- 7.3 She draws attention to Decision SC58-15, in which the Standing Committee at its online sessions of 23 and 25 June 2020, “instructed the Secretariat to continue to publish the status of each Party’s contribution on the Convention’s website and invited the Parties with outstanding contributions to agree on a payment plan in discussion with the Secretariat; and instructed the Secretariat to work with Parties which have been able to pay outstanding contributions, particularly long-standing ones, to identify good practices and efforts that could be shared.”
- 7.4 The status of each Party’s contribution is updated monthly and published here:
https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/status_contributions.pdf

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Parties go into a closed session without recording.
- 8.2 On resuming the open session, the chair proudly announces the declaration, on 15 September 2021 by UNESCO, of the world's first five-country Transboundary Biosphere Reserve that covers one million ha of floodplains along the Mura, Drava and Danube rivers in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia. The Biosphere Reserve includes existing Ramsar Sites and provides an opportunity for their extension and the creation of a Transboundary Ramsar Site.
- 8.3 The Secretariat will monitor registrations for the Extraordinary COP and support all Parties, notably those who missed this meeting, to register in time and to produce their Credentials, in order to leave nobody behind.
- 8.4 Before closing the meeting, the chair thanks the Secretariat staff for their support and all participants for their engagement and contributions and looks forward to meet delegations of all European Parties at the Extraordinary COP on 25-29 October 2021.

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

Third Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

25-29 October 2021 (online)

ExCOP3 Doc.8.1

**Draft Resolution on the Postponement of the 14th Meeting of the
Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14)**

1. NOTING the Decision of the Standing Committee SC57-17 that accepted by acclamation the offer of China to host the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14) in Wuhan in 2021;
2. RECOGNIZING the progress on COP14 preparations by the host country, the Subgroup on COP14 of the Standing Committee and the Secretariat;
3. CONSIDERING that the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties cannot be held in 2021 as initially planned due to constraints arising from the COVID-19 pandemic;
4. TAKING NOTE of the Decision of the Standing Committee SC59-10 that approved 21 to 29 November 2022 as the proposed dates for COP14 and agreed to submit the new dates for COP14 to the extraordinary meeting of the COP to be held in 2021;

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5. EXPRESSES its gratitude to the Government of China as the host country of the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties for its commitment and progress made on COP14 preparations;
6. DECIDES to postpone the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to 21 to 29 November 2022 due to the exceptional nature of the circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic;
7. REQUESTS the host country and the Secretariat with the support of the Subgroup on COP14 of the Standing Committee to continue the planning process for a successful COP14 meeting in 2022.

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

Third Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties

25-29 October 2021 (online)

ExCOP3 Doc.8.2

Draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters

Proposed 2022 core budget of the Convention on Wetlands

1. RECALLING the budgetary provisions established by paragraphs 5 and 6 of Article 6 of the Convention;
2. RECALLING Resolution XIII.2 which approved the budget of the Convention for the triennium 2019-2021;
3. CONSIDERING that the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties cannot be held in 2021 as initially planned due to constraints arising from the COVID-19 pandemic;
4. TAKING NOTE of the Decision of the Standing Committee SC59-10 that approved 21 to 29 November 2022 as the proposed dates for COP14 and agreed to submit the new dates for COP14 to the extraordinary meeting of the COP to be held in 2021;
5. NOTING the need, therefore, to make arrangements to keep the operations of the Convention, including its Secretariat and to enable Contracting Parties to pay their contributions in 2022;
6. TAKING NOTE of the Decision of the Standing Committee SC59-31 that approved the one-year budget for 2022 for submission to the extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties based on budget Scenario A at 0% increase;
7. RECOGNIZING the exceptional nature of the circumstances arising from the pandemic;

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8. DECIDES that the present Resolution is supplementary to Resolution XIII.2, which remains in effect until the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties and those provisions will apply also to the year 2022, unless otherwise provided for in the present decision;
9. DECIDES that the *Terms of Reference for the Financial Administration of the Convention* contained in Annex 3 to Resolution 5.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters* (1993), is to be applied *in toto* to 2022;

10. APPROVES the core budget for 2022 as presented in Annex 1 of the present Resolution, to enable the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024;
11. DECIDES that in the case of unforeseeable circumstances, the Standing Committee may approve the relevant budgetary matters until the Conference of the Parties reconvenes.

Annex 1
Proposed budget 2022

Ramsar Proposed Budget 2022	Budget 2022 for approval by extraordinary COP	SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings	Total Budget 2022
CHF 000'S			
INCOME			
Parties' Contributions	3,779		3,779
Voluntary contributions	1,065		1,065
Income Tax	225		225
Income Interest	12		12
TOTAL INCOME	5,081		5,081
EXPENDITURES			
A. Secretariat Senior Management & Governance	1,030	5	1,035
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	990		990
Travel	40	5	45
B. Resource Mobilization and Outreach	594	45	639
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	438		438
CEPA Program	30		30
Comms, Translations, Publications and Reporting Implementation	60	40	100
Web/IT support and Development	56		56
Travel	10	5	15
C. Regional Advice and Support	1,237	10	1,247

Ramsar Proposed Budget 2022	Budget 2022 for approval by extraordinary COP	SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings	Total Budget 2022
CHF 000'S			
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	1,170		1,170
Travel	67	10	77
D. Support to Regional Initiatives	100	0	100
Regional networks and centers*	100		100
E. Science and Policy	839	5	844
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	651		651
STRP implementation	35	5	40
Travel STRP Chair	5		5
STRP meetings	50		50
Ramsar Sites Information Service (maintenance and development)	80		80
Travel	18		18
G. Administration	481	11	492
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	337		337
Staff hiring and departure costs	49		49
Secretariat Staff Travel	0		0
Equipment/Office Supplies	95		95
Planning and Capacity building	0	11	11
H. Standing Committee Services	150	0	150
Standing Committee delegates' support	45		45
Standing Committee meetings	10		10
SC translation	60		60
Simultaneous interpretation at SC meetings	35		35

Ramsar Proposed Budget 2022	Budget 2022 for approval by extraordinary COP	SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings	Total Budget 2022
CHF 000'S			
I. IUCN Administrative Service Charges (maximum)	541	0	541
Administration, Human Resources, Finance & IT services	541		541
J. Miscellaneous - Reserve Fund	109	120	229
Staff Provisions	20		20
Provision for outstanding contributions	30	120	150
Legal Services	59		59
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	5,081	196	5,277

*Budget allocated to Regional Initiatives will be disbursed after the approval of the new Regional Initiatives by COP14