

Resolution VII.1



"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

Regional Categorization of countries under the Convention, and composition, roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, including tasks of Standing Committee members

1. RECALLING the Resolution on the Establishment of a Standing Committee adopted by 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) in 1987;
2. RECALLING ALSO Action 8.1.3 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 adopted by Resolution VI.14 of COP6, which reads: *"Review and if necessary redefine the responsibilities and possible financial needs of the Standing Committee prior to the 7th COP (1999)"*; as well as Action 8.1.2, which reads: *"Keep under review the regional representation in the Standing Committee as the number of Contracting Parties increases"*;
3. CONSIDERING it useful for the effective functioning of the Convention that Contracting Parties should have a clear process for creating appropriate regional groups;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

4. DECIDES that the Ramsar Convention shall have the following regional groups:
 1. Africa
 2. Asia
 3. Neotropics
 4. Europe
 5. North America
 6. Oceania
5. FURTHER DECIDES that Contracting Parties and those countries that are eligible to join the Convention are assigned to the above regional groups, but that those Contracting Parties which are near to the boundaries of the allocated region, as given in Annex 1, can at their own request, based on the existence of similar natural conditions, participate¹ within an alternative region, while remaining a member of their geographical region, upon formal notification of this intent to the COP, provided that the preconditions for this request are not objected to by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel;

¹ "Participate" is defined in this context as different from membership within the alternative region. Participation confers to the state the right to be present in meetings, to speak, to exchange information, to submit reports, to cooperate on a scientific and practical level, to contribute to joint projects. It does not include the right to be a representative of this alternative region nor to participate in the nomination of its representative(s). It does not confer the right to vote within the alternative region.

6. DECIDES to introduce a proportional system for the composition of the Standing Committee, by which each regional group in paragraph 4 above will be represented by voting members in the Standing Committee according to the following criteria:
 - a) one representative for regional groups with 1 to 12 Contracting Parties,
 - b) two representatives for regional groups with 13 to 24 Contracting Parties,
 - c) three representatives for regional groups with 25 to 36 Contracting Parties,
 - d) four representatives for regional groups with 37 to 48 Contracting Parties,
 - e) five representatives for regional groups with 49 to 60 Contracting Parties.
7. FURTHER DECIDES that the host countries of the most recent and the next meeting of the COP are also voting members of the Standing Committee;
8. DECIDES ALSO that the regional representatives shall be elected by the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the basis of nominations received from the regional groups established in paragraph 4 above;
9. DETERMINES that the terms of office of the regional representatives shall commence at the close of the meeting of the COP at which they have been elected and shall expire at the close of the next ordinary meeting of the COP, and that each Contracting Party may serve on the Committee for a maximum of two consecutive terms;
10. REQUESTS Contracting Parties that are voting members of the Standing Committee to convey to the Ramsar Bureau, through their diplomatic channels, the name of the officer(s) in the designated national Ramsar Administrative Authority who act as their delegates on the Standing Committee, as well as the name of their substitutes, should they be needed;
11. DECIDES that the Contracting Party which hosts the Bureau of the Convention and the Contracting Party which hosts the International Office of Wetlands International shall continue to have the status of Permanent Observers in the Standing Committee;
12. DETERMINES that the Ramsar Bureau shall continue to notify all Contracting Parties of the date and agenda of meetings of the Standing Committee at least three months in advance of each meeting, so that they may, as appropriate, make arrangements to be represented at the meeting as observers;
13. FURTHER DETERMINES that countries which are not Contracting Parties but have expressed an interest in joining the Convention may be also admitted as observers at meetings of the Standing Committee;
14. RESOLVES that the Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel shall be invited as an observer to Standing Committee meetings, as well as other experts and/or institutions that the Standing Committee may deem appropriate for assisting in its consideration of particular agenda items;
15. FURTHER RESOLVES that international organizations which are official International Organization Partners in the work of the Convention shall be invited to participate as observers in meetings of the Standing Committee;

16. DECIDES that if an extraordinary meeting of the COP is held between two ordinary meetings, the host country shall participate as an observer in the work of the Committee on matters related to the organization of the meeting, provided that the country in question is not already present in the Committee as a member or permanent observer;
17. RECOMMENDS that the Contracting Parties in regional groups with one representative in the Standing Committee use a rotation system for the nomination of the regional representative, and that in regional groups with two or more representatives the selection be made in such a manner as to achieve a balance in relation to biogeographical, geopolitical, and cultural considerations;
18. DECIDES that at its first meeting immediately after the close of the COP the Standing Committee shall elect its Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the members and chair of the Subgroup on Finance established by Resolution VI.17 of COP6;
19. FURTHER DECIDES that the Standing Committee shall meet at least once each year, normally at the seat of the Convention Bureau. The costs of participation of Committee members from developing countries and countries with economies in transition shall be borne by the Convention;
20. DETERMINES that within the policy agreed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee shall be to:
 - a) carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval;
 - b) make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
 - c) supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the implementation of policy by the Ramsar Bureau, the execution of the Bureau's budget, and conduct of the Bureau's programmes;
 - d) provide guidance and advice to the Ramsar Bureau on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Bureau;
 - e) act as Conference Committee at meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
 - f) establish subgroups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
 - g) promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - h) submit proposals to the COP for the election of members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);

- i) approve the work plan of the STRP on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
- j) adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;
- k) review each triennium the criteria for and select the laureates of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18;
- l) report to the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.

21. DETERMINES that the tasks of the regional representatives elected to serve in the Standing Committee shall be those contained in Annex II of this resolution;

22. DECIDES that the Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, shall be governed, *mutatis mutandis*, by the Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Conference.

Annex I

Allocation of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties to the six Ramsar regional groups

NOTE: Names of countries in capital and bold letters denote Contracting Parties to the Convention at the time of approval of this Resolution.

1. AFRICA

ALGERIA	Eritrea	NIGER
Angola	Ethiopia	Nigeria
Benin	GABON	Rwanda
BOTSWANA	GAMBIA	Sao Tome and Principe
BURKINA FASO	GHANA	SENEGAL
Burundi	GUINEA	Seychelles
Cameroon	GUINEA-BISSAU	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	KENYA	Somalia
Central African Republic	Lesotho	SOUTH AFRICA
CHAD	Liberia	Sudan
COMOROS	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Swaziland
CONGO	MADAGASCAR	TOGO
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	MALAWI	TUNISIA
DEMOCRATIC	MALI	UGANDA
REPUBLIC OF THE	MAURITANIA	United Republic of
CONGO	Mauritius	Tanzania
Djibouti	MOROCCO	ZAMBIA
EGYPT	Mozambique	Zimbabwe
Equatorial Guinea	NAMIBIA	

2. ASIA

Afghanistan	JAPAN	Qatar
Azerbaijan	JORDAN	REPUBLIC OF KOREA
BAHRAIN	Kazakhstan	Saudi Arabia
BANGLADESH	Kuwait	Singapore
Bhutan	Kyrgyzstan	SRI LANKA
Brunei Darussalam	Lao People's Democratic	SYRIAN ARAB
Cambodia	Republic	REPUBLIC
CHINA	Lebanon	Tajikistan
Democratic People's	MALAYSIA	THAILAND
Republic of Korea	Maldives	Turkmenistan
INDIA	MONGOLIA	United Arab Emirates
INDONESIA	Myanmar	Uzbekistan
IRAN, ISLAMIC	NEPAL	VIETNAM
REPUBLIC OF	Oman	Yemen
Iraq	PAKISTAN	
ISRAEL	PHILIPPINES	

3. NEOTROPICS

Antigua and Barbuda
ARGENTINA
BAHAMAS
Barbados
BELIZE
BOLIVIA
BRAZIL
CHILE
COLOMBIA
COSTA RICA
Cuba
Dominica

Dominican Republic
ECUADOR
El Salvador
Grenada
GUATEMALA
Guyana
Haiti
HONDURAS
JAMAICA
NICARAGUA
PANAMA
PARAGUAY

PERU
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the
Grenadines
SURINAME
**TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO**
URUGUAY
VENEZUELA

4. EUROPE

ALBANIA
Andorra
ARMENIA
AUSTRIA
Belarus
BELGIUM
Bosnia & Herzegovina
BULGARIA
CROATIA
Cyprus
CZECH REPUBLIC
DENMARK
ESTONIA
FINLAND
FRANCE
GEORGIA
GERMANY

GREECE
Holy See
HUNGARY
ICELAND
IRELAND
ITALY
LATVIA
LIECHTENSTEIN
LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG
MALTA
MONACO
NETHERLANDS
NORWAY
POLAND
PORTUGAL
Republic of Moldova

ROMANIA
**RUSSIAN
FEDERATION**
San Marino
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
SLOVENIA
SPAIN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
**THE FORMER
YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA**
TURKEY
UKRAINE
UNITED KINGDOM
YUGOSLAVIA

5. NORTH AMERICA

CANADA
MEXICO

**UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA**

6. OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA
Cook Islands
Fiji
Kiribati
Marshall Islands

Micronesia (Federated
States of)
Nauru
NEW ZEALAND
Niue
Palau

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

Annex II

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee

The Contracting Parties that have accepted to be elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee shall have the following tasks:

1. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives, according to paragraph 10 of this resolution, and to make every effort that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
2. When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other regional representative(s).
3. To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one regional representative, they shall agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each regional representative.
4. To canvass the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
5. To advise the Bureau in setting the agenda of regional meetings.
6. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.
7. To provide advice as requested by the Chairperson and/or the chairs of subgroups and/or the Bureau of the Convention.
8. In the regions concerned, to make deliberate efforts to encourage other countries to join the Convention.