



**Regional consultation in Oceania in preparation for the third extraordinary meeting
of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands
Online, 22 September from 08:00 to 10:00 CEST**

Participating Parties (5): Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Vanuatu.

Summary report

Agenda item 1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 As Chair of the meeting, Australia, opened the preparatory meeting and welcomed Oceanic Parties to the Convention.
- 1.2 The Secretary General welcomed Parties and provided an overview of the ongoing work by Standing Committee, its working groups, STRP and the Secretariat support to these activities and the Parties. She noted with satisfaction that the United Nations General Assembly, in its session of 30 August 2021, proclaimed 2 February as World Wetlands Day.

Agenda item 2. Approval of the agenda

- 2.1 Australia proposed the following items to be added to the agenda:
 - The Oceania Representative on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to share an update on the ongoing projects.
 - Australia to share a brief update on recent activities related to \$100 million initiative to protect oceans.
 - To discuss the status of the submission of the National Reports for COP14 among the regional Parties.

Agenda item 3. Procedural matters for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP

- 3.1 The Secretariat briefly introduced the Extraordinary Meeting of the 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 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
- 3.3 **All Documents** for the Extraordinary Meeting of the 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>.
- 3.4 The Bureau of the Extraordinary Meeting of the 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.

- 3.5 It is crucial **that all Parties register and submit credentials** for the Extraordinary Meeting of the COP. The Meeting requires a quorum of two thirds of all Parties (114 Parties) to take decisions, according to Rules 29 and 39.
- 3.6 As indicated in Diplomatic Notes 2021/6 and 2021/7, representatives shall submit credentials in accordance with Rule 18. **Obtaining Credentials may take substantial time**, as they must 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 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.
- 3.7 Credentials should be scanned and **submitted by email** to: excop@ramsar.org as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours after the opening of the meeting on 25 October, as they need to be reviewed by the Credentials Committee prior to the opening of second session of the extraordinary COP on Thursday 28 October.
- 3.8 Further information on the requirements and a sample template is available in the previously mentioned Diplomatic Note 2021/6 dated 9 July.
- 3.9 The Credentials Committee will meet on 26 and 27 October to review credentials. The Oceanic Parties will decide on their nomination to the Credentials Committee before the 30 September.
- 3.10 Only Parties that have submitted **credentials** for their participating delegates count for reaching the necessary quorum of the Extraordinary Meeting of the COP.

Agenda item 4. Discussion of the Draft Resolutions
--

- 4.1 **New dates for COP14:** The Secretariat introduced document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.1*, 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).
- 4.2 **Convention budget for 2022:** The Secretariat introduced document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.2*, 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.
- 4.3 The annual dues 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.

Agenda item 5. Logistical matters for the Third 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 58th and 59th meetings of the Standing Committee.
- 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. Registered participants are strongly encouraged to use a headset as this greatly increase the quality of the audio should they take the floor.
- 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.

Agenda item 6. Outstanding contributions and the requirement for provisions

- 6.1 The Secretariat reported on the importance of regular payment of annual contributions. In addition to creating a gap in the regular budget when 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 as operations of the Convention.
- 6.2 The Secretariat explained that in accordance with Decision SC57-39 taken by the Standing Committee, the provision for non-collection of outstanding annual dues 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 dues not received within two years, 60% on dues not received within three years, and 80% on dues not received within four years. In order to fully comply with Swiss law, with the objective of incorporating the 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 contribution payment to cover for outstanding dues for more than four years at the time when the provision is calculated.
- 6.3 The Secretariat drew 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.”
- 6.4 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

Agenda item 7. Any other business

- 7.1 The Oceania Representative on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel briefly provided an update on the four high-priority STRP tasks in the 2019-2021 triennium:
- The special edition of the Global Wetland Outlook for the 50th anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands: The panel is progressing on the preparations for the special edition of the Global Wetland Outlook,
 - Sustainable agriculture and wetlands: This task is focused on the recent international and regional reports on agriculture and how the different trends are impacting wetlands, including Ramsar Sites. Two draft documents, including a briefing note and a policy brief, are produced on this topic and are in the final review phase,
 - Peatland restoration: This task is focused on the role of wetlands in climate change mitigation and adaptation. A technical report, a briefing note and a policy brief on peatland management are in the production phase,
 - Blue carbon ecosystems: This task is focused on the role of mangroves, seagrasses and salt marches ecosystems in the Ramsar Sites. A report, a briefing note and a policy brief will be produced on this topic. The STRP representative highlights the relevance of this task in the Oceania region and appreciates the support provided by Australia on this topic.
- 7.2 The Oceania Representative on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel drew the attention of the present Contracting Parties to the existing challenges regarding the application of Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Sites Criteria for identifying Wetlands of the International Importance. The STRP chair is actively identifying reliable datasets that can be used for designating new Ramsar Sites or updating the existing Sites in the region.
- 7.3 Australia mentioned the allocation of 10 million AUD to support the Oceania Region with the restoration of blue carbon ecosystems. She also shares information regarding a 6 million AUD initiative and its pilot projects to protect and manage blue carbon ecosystems in Fiji. She highlighted the leading role of Australia in the Blue Carbon Partnership.
- 7.4 Australia highlighted the importance of the National Reports. The Contracting Parties in the Oceania Region are encouraged to submit outstanding National Reports by the end of 2021.
- 7.5 The Secretariat will monitor registrations for the Extraordinary Meeting of the COP and support all Parties, notably those who missed this meeting, to register in time and to produce their Credentials.
- 7.7 The Chair closed the meeting at 9:50 CEST.