MINUTES
Europe Regional Pre-COP14 Meeting – Convention on Wetlands
26-29 April 2022

Participants (36 of the 48 Parties in the European Region): Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Ukraine.

SESSION 1
26 April 2022 online 14:00-17:00 (UTC+2 Geneva time)

1- Welcome
1. The Vice-Chair of Standing Committee, Ms Jenny Lonnstad (Sweden) welcomes the participants and looks forward to productive exchanges.
2. The Secretary General of the Convention, Ms Martha Rojas Urrego, provides welcome remarks, thanking Parties for their work in the past years despite the pandemic and stressing the importance of this meeting to prepare for the upcoming resumed session of the 59th meeting of Standing Committee (SC59) and COP14. She assures the support from the Secretariat team during this meeting and its availability to provide any needed information.

2- Election of the chair of the Meeting
3. Based on the proposal agreed during the preparatory meeting on 17 February, Ms Flore Lafaye de Micheaux (France) is elected to chair the Europe Pre-COP14 Meeting.
4. The following Parties indicate that they will attend physically SC59 at Gland on 23-27 May 2022: Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (in bold: current SC members and alternate members).

3- Adoption of the Agenda
5. The updated Provisional Agenda distributed earlier this day is adopted. Then, several Parties ask for the floor:
6. The United Kingdom thanks the Secretariat for the practical arrangements for the physical meeting of SC59 at Gland and suggests to discuss under agenda item 10 the possibility for additional representatives to participate online, hoping that the Secretariat could provide an update on the possibility of a hybrid SC59 meeting.
7. The United Kingdom condemns Russia’s assault on Ukraine and raises concerns about the immense and potentially long-term impacts of the ongoing war on the environment, including on waterbodies and wetlands.
8. Ukraine confirms that the military occupation by the Russian Federation impacts the management and conservation of 17 Ramsar Sites on its territory, and that another 4 Ukrainian Ramsar Sites are under threat.

9. France, on behalf of the European Union, expresses its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian aggression which grossly violates international law and the UN charter, and undermines international security and stability.

10. The Secretary General informs the Meeting that the Secretariat has shared information received by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine with all Contracting Parties of the Convention (Diplomatic Note 2022/2 of 17 March 2022) and that consideration of this issue was included in the agenda for the resumed session of SC59.

4- Review the status of implementation of the Convention and establishment of priorities for the new triennium

11. The Secretariat summarizes the main achievements, challenges and implementation priorities, based on the implementation report submitted to COP13 in 2018. Similar points were also identified through a consultation of the Parties by the Strategic Plan Working Group in 2020, particularly as the Convention seeks to implement the forthcoming Global Biodiversity Framework. It is anticipated that the analysis of the new National Reports for COP14 will confirm this. The Global Wetland Outlook 2018 and its Special edition 2021 provide further insight into wetland challenges and priorities for the coming years.

12. Belarus draws attention to the violation by Poland of the provisions of a number of international treaties governing international cooperation in the field of environmental protection, including the Ramsar Convention, expressed by the construction of a 5 m fence about 200 km long on the territory of the transboundary UNESCO World Heritage Site Bialowieza Forest. The fence under construction has a negative impact on the hydrological regime of the Dikoye Fen Mire Ramsar Site.

5- Roles and responsibilities of Standing Committee regional representatives and National Focal Points

13. The Secretariat presents the roles and responsibilities of the regional representatives on Standing Committee and National Focal Points, as described in Resolution XIII.4, that will be updated with the DR in SC59 Doc.15 for the next triennium (cf. below). Azerbaijan, Sweden and the United Kingdom briefly share their experience as a SC regional representative since COP13.

6- Nomination of European regional representatives to Standing Committee for the period COP14 – COP15

14. The chair invites Parties to share information about consultations and their interest to be nominated to serve as regional representatives on the Standing Committee during the period between COP14 and COP15. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine will end their second consecutive term and need to be replaced at COP14 (according to paragraph 8 of the DR in SC59 Doc.15). The UK indicated it would not seek to stand again as a Standing Committee Member. No Party announces yet its interest to be nominated, but consultations, internally and between Parties, are continuing. Later on, Austria and Georgia announce their interest to serve on SC during the next term.

7- Accreditation process for COP14
15. The Secretariat presents the process for Party delegations to submit credentials to participate in COP14, as outlined in the Rules of Procedures (Rules 16-19) and announces that a Diplomatic Note will be distributed to all Parties with a model of a letter of credentials, to support the process. It stresses the importance of submitting valid credentials in line with the Rules to enhance efficiency of the process. Parties propose that the Secretariat make a first check of conformity of incoming letters of credentials and inform the concerned Party already before the COP, in order to ease the work of the Credentials Committee during the COP, who will examine the credentials and make proposals to the COP (Rule 19). The Secretariat takes note of this request.

8- Discussion of Draft Resolutions (DRs)

16. A total of 30 DRs were submitted for COP14, by the Secretariat, working groups and subsidiary bodies, and by Contracting Parties. They are all published on the website and are referred below with the SC59 Document number.

17. DR Finance and Budgetary matters: The Secretariat introduces Document 8.3 with three budget scenarios for 2023-2025 and the related DR. In response to questions raised by Parties, the Secretariat provides further explanations on differences between the three scenarios, as well as on staff costs, performance-based provisions and bonuses. Parties seek to clarify the variations in percentage increase in budget and percentage increase in Parties' contributions in Scenarios B and C, which the Secretariat offers to clarify in writing. In addition, the Secretariat clarifies that in Scenario C, item 2.c, the correct percentage is 4.4%. The Secretary General makes clarifications regarding Secretariat staff in paragraph 34, which brings forward the decision taken at COP13 in Resolution XIII.2 paragraph 35, in line with the 1993 Delegation of Authority to the Secretary General and its Supplementary Note. Regarding the administration of the non-core funded projects, including the fundraising for RRIs, referred to in paragraph 26 of the DR, she reminds that this issue had been discussed at COP13 and prior SC meetings, leading to Resolution XIII.2 paragraph 26, which the Secretariat is implementing. Regarding the document on potential financial implication of submitted DRs, the Secretariat is preparing it on the basis of the DRs submitted and will make it available soon.

18. Sweden points out that paragraph 26 of the DR, referred to by the Secretary General, is not applicable to the IKI-project, since this project is not an approved non-core funded project. She raises that the DR should be improved by including prioritisations among different work tasks for the Secretariat, giving support to RRIs being a very low priority compared to normal Secretariat work issues.

19. Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands: The Secretariat introduces Document 9 (without a DR) Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention: best practices in the development of wetland inventories. France is illustrating its experience with national wetland inventories and monitoring and shares a PPT with the audience. The Secretariat summarizes the process of annual submission of national wetland extent as percent of total land area to the statistical office of UNDESA, provided through national reports, in its role as co-custodian of SDG 6.6.1. The access to the UN SDGs data base is accessible here: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/.

20. DR Strategic Plan: Switzerland, on behalf of the Strategic Plan Working Group, introduces Document 10 Rev.1 with a DR on the review of the fourth Strategic Plan, additions for the 2022-2024 triennium and key elements for SP5. In the discussion, Parties stress the point that Working Groups should be open to Parties who are not members of the Standing Committee (as implied in Rev.1 and stated in other DRs).
21. **DR Effectiveness and Efficiency:** The United Kingdom, chairing the Effectiveness Working Group, introduces Document 11 with the DR on the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Ramsar Convention. Parties recognize that the consensual points, how to improve key operational issues, are covered by the DR, despite the fact that some hoped to see more proposals, which will hopefully be covered by other DRs focusing on scientific and technical issues and the consolidation of Resolutions.

SESSION 2

27 April 2022 online 13:00-17:00

22. **DRs Review of previous Resolutions:** The Secretariat introduces Document 13 providing the chapeau for Document 13.1 with a detailed analysis and, in its Annex 1 DR on a process for the review and consolidation of Resolutions and Recommendations of the COP, as well as Document 13.3 that provides in its Annex 2, a thematic example and proposal how to prepare a Consolidated DR on inventories of wetlands.

23. **DRs Preparing negotiation documents:** Sweden introduces Document 24.17 DR Online drafting and preparatory negotiations of documents that aims to increase the transparency and quality of decision-making, based on the analysis and proposals made in the DR of Document 13.1. Document 24.18 DR How to structure, write and handle Convention documents and messages provides further guidance how to clarify responsibilities between the Parties and the Secretariat, including online work to save time.

24. Parties discuss different aspects of the huge task to review and consolidate all Resolutions taken by the Convention over the years. A thorough process may possibly take several years and should therefore be well structured. The Parties raise several issues: a) if steps in the process could be done online, b) the question of the suggested tempo, a few consolidations done per triennium might be too slow, c) making a consolidation of a theme into one consolidated Resolution might just create a very long consolidated Resolution, while it could be better to have the ambition to reduce the number of Resolutions for a given theme, and d) suggestion to note the IUCN classification on the status of its decisions, which can be useful and may save time and strength to focus on more interesting and fundamental work.

25. The Secretary General clarifies that the work submitted responds to the mandate given by COP13 and Standing Committee Decision SC57-19, Decision SC58-19 and SC58-21, and that it was based on comparable processes in CITES and CMS. She mentions that intersessional discussions considered i. a. the IUCN approach, and that further exchanges of experience could be possible if so requested by the SC. The Secretary General mentions that she would provide comments on DRs 24.17 and 24.18 to the resumed session of SC59, as they refer to the role and work of the Secretariat. Finland, Georgia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom volunteer to look further into this matter, already before SC59.

26. **DRs Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs):** Costa Rica, chairing the RRI Working Group, introduces Document 21.1 DR on RRIs 2022-2024. Then Sweden introduces the complementary Document 24.9 DR on RRIs – the basics, Document 24.10 DR on RRIs – COP14-COP15 and Document 24.11 DR on RRIs – addressing old decisions, providing additional elements to complement the output by the working group.

27. The four RRIs that cover together 37 out of the 48 European Parties (BlackSeaWet, Carpathian Wetland Initiative, MedWet, NorBalWet) briefly present their structure and activities, plus a proposal to work more in synergy and share approaches among them, notably also for the development of Ramsar Site managers networks.
28. After these illustrations, Parties discuss the different DRs and support the Swedish proposals, suggesting that parts from the DR by the Working Group could be included in the Swedish DRs. Regarding the operation of the RRLs, some Parties wish to have more transparency and better annual reporting by RRLs. They would like to clarify better the roles of the RRLs and the involvement of the Secretariat in projects of RRLs. The Secretary General explains that the role of the Secretariat was widely discussed before and at COP13 resulting in paragraph 26 of Resolution XIII.2 which, together with subsequent relevant SC decisions, is guiding the work of the Secretariat. Sweden points out again what was earlier mentioned in the discussion on the budget DR, cf. paragraph 18 above.

29. Then Parties go into closed session.

SESSION 3

28 April 2022 online 10:00-12:15

30. **DR Ramsar Sites (RS) status:** The Secretariat introduces Document 23 Rev.1 DR Status of Sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, stating that SC59 may request that the status report in Annex I be updated to reflect the situation closer to COP14 (July 2022), as was done prior to COP13 in 2018. Parties ask for this update and make proposals to simplify the process and reduce the burden of timely updating of RS information and how to act more efficiently on issues related to Article 3.2 of the Convention. They remind that the burden on the Europe team in the Secretariat is particularly heavy, as it has to deal with nearly half of all Ramsar Sites in the world, preventing it from taking charge of other items of interest. To decrease the workload for the Secretariat, a report on Ramsar Sites could be compiled once during a triennium, instead of three times, and would not be included in a DR but be kept as a separate report. Parties suggest that the DR would not simply refer to the Secretariat report in Annex I, as in the past, but make concrete proposals how to facilitate updating RS information and solutioning Article 3.2 files. Parties consider that the webinars on the online Ramsar Sites information Service (RSIS) are useful and should be focussing specifically on the needs of the compilers of site-based information.

31. The Secretariat explains that since 2015, when the online RSIS was adopted, updating outdated information is much easier and should be done on a rolling basis, i.e. updating only the specific element of information that is no longer valid, without having to update the rest of the information or maps that are still valid. The system registers the date of such partial updates for the calculation of the six-year period. The Secretariat stresses the importance of having robust data on what is the largest global network of protected areas and a core area of the Convention, recognizing contributions from the Convention to SDG 15. Parties agree with the importance of good data, but stress the real difficulty of these updates, what the Secretariat seems not to realize.

32. **DR on RS in specific territories and RS criteria:** Paragraphs 7-15 of Document 23 Rev.1 provide background information on the subject which is also addressed by Document 24.2 that was submitted later with a DR on review of the Ramsar criteria, and delisting of RS located in territories which are not recognized at the UN level as part of the territory of the submitting country. The Secretariat mentions that it had reported these issues to the Executive Team, which requested that these need to be addressed by the Standing Committee. Parties agree that it is not up to the Secretariat to delist any RS. Not just establishing new RS may be problematic in areas of territorial disputes, changes of RS borders, reporting and delisting RS also need to be addressed. Furthermore, Parties suggest that issues of sovereignty over specific territories be debated in more appropriate fora than
the Convention on Wetlands. Parties also consider the impact of removing existing protections from internationally important wetland sites which would undermine the core objectives of the Ramsar Convention. Concerning the revision of RS designation criteria, Parties suggest that a working group be established to work on this issue, although queries were raised over ‘non-environmental criteria’.

33. **DR Waterbird population estimates**: Hungary introduces Document 24.13 *DR Waterbird population estimates to support new and existing RS designations under Ramsar Criterion 6 – use of alternative estimates*. Parties suggest that the use of population estimates be better aligned with AEWA and the RRI EAAFP. Parties who support Wetlands International financially, consider that this support covers the core task of keeping the Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE) updated and that other population data, not only peer-reviewed but also in the grey literature, may be used when there are gaps in the WPE. The Secretariat reminds that this is an *ad hoc* task given by the SC to the STRP.

34. **DR Nature-based solutions by wetlands (NbS)**: Spain, chairing the MedWet RRI, invites the MedWet coordinator to introduce Document 24.1 *DR on Protection, management and restoration of wetlands as Nature-based solutions to address the climate crisis*. Parties are supportive of this DR and suggest that the proposed community of practice be better defined, that the DR include the Polluters Pays Principle, to include the NbS theme into the work plan of STRP, and to refer to the UNEA5 Resolution on Nature-based Solutions.

35. **DR indicators to measure effectiveness**: Slovenia introduces Document 24.3 *DR on development of legal indicators to measure the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention*. Parties note that such indicators should be few, practical, not too detailed, that they consider already existing indicators of the Strategic Plan, and should be taken up in the National Reports to COP. Parties note that a consultant would have to develop such indicators, and should refer back to other Resolutions asking for indicators.

**SESSION 4**

*28 April 2022* online 14:00-17:00

36. **DR international mangrove centre**: China introduces Document 24.16 *DR on the Establishment of the international Mangrove Center in the Framework of the Ramsar Convention*. Parties would like to see more details on the operation, budget and financing of such a centre that should stand on its own, have its own CEPA capacity and should not depend on the Secretariat. Parties ask for more information on linkages with other initiatives on mangroves and the global integration with international organisations. The mangrove centre should have a global coverage and could operate as an RRI. Some Parties suggest to reflect, if the centre’s mandate should be enlarged to cover all wetland types related to Blue Carbon.

37. **DR small wetlands**: China introduces Document 24.4 *DR on Guidance on Conservation and Management of Small Wetlands*. Parties recall that the current Ramsar wetland classification already recognizes small wetlands. They would not necessarily support a parallel but different, compulsory classification system for small wetlands. Parties point out that the present classification system has overlaps and gaps, and that a working group could look if a revised classification system could address both. They also mention that different kinds of legislation, that can be useful to preserve small wetland, could be included in the DR. In 2018, Resolution XIII.21 *Conservation and management of small wetlands* was adopted. Any new DR should build on this and integrate earlier management guidance adopted by the
Convention. The new DR should not be too compulsory but make suggestions in the form of recommendations.

38. **DR wetlands in national development strategies**: China introduces Document 24.5 **DR on Integrating wetland conservation and restoration into national sustainable development strategy**. Parties are very supportive of this DR that could also feed into a Ministerial Declaration. The DR provides a useful link between the current Strategic Plan and the preparation of the subsequent 5th Strategic Plan to start after COP14, and it could address important connections with the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and the 2023 UN Water Conference.

39. **DRs on scientific and technical work**: The chair of the STRP summarizes the work undertaken by STRP during the current triennium and introduces Document 26 **DR Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2023-2025**, as well as proposed future priorities contained in Annex 2 of Document 25 **Report of the Chair of the STRP**. The importance of a realistic work plan aligned with the priorities of the Convention is noted, and in this regard the need to consider the capacity of the panel as well as appropriate financial resources for its work. Parties stress the need for an immediate start of STRP work after the COP, instead of starting only after the first meeting of SC after the COP, as is current practice.

40. In relation to the proposed task on guidance on the application of criteria in RS designation, Parties note that two DRs include suggestions for review of wetland types/categories, and in view of this, the task may be considered lower priority and more relevant to pursue at a later stage.

41. Parties suggest that assessment of options to support updating of RS information could be a high priority, noting earlier discussion on the status of RSs and the large number of RSs for which RIS have not been updated. Tasks rated as high priority under TWA 4 could be considered medium priority, in particular the task on OECMs as an opportunity in promoting wetland conservation and wise use. The Secretary General notes that most RSs are PAs based on the definition and categories established by IUCN, and emphasizes the importance of this e.g. in positioning the site network as a contribution towards the global PA target and other relevant targets. Identification of RSs as OECMs should only apply to those sites that do not meet the definition of PAs.

42. Sweden introduces Document 24.14 **DR The Ramsar Convention’s scientific and technical work – the basics**, and Document 24.15 **DR The Ramsar Convention’s scientific and technical bodies COP14-COP15**. Parties express appreciation of Sweden’s work in bringing forward important issues and looking for solutions, including in relation to maximizing the time available for the STRP to implement its triennial workplan and enhancing its capacity. They note that proposed changes would address some key challenges in the work of the STRP. Support is expressed for opening up to more experts, while ensuring continuity and maintaining institutional memory. Virtual meetings may provide more flexibility and efficiency in the work of the panel, however the importance of in-person interaction is also noted. Several Parties suggest that feedback and input be sought from STRP members in relation to proposed changes. The chair of the STRP mentions that he looked into the suggested proposals in these DRs and is supporting them. It is suggested that ideas and proposals presented in the DRs may be integrated into the STRP DR contained in Document 26.

43. A question is raised in relation to the possibility of making changes to STRP modalities, bearing in mind the need for a prior review as per Resolution XII.5, paragraph 16 confirming “...that the organization and the processes of the STRP adopted by this Resolution will apply
for the 2016-2018 triennium and beyond unless amended by subsequent COP decisions as a result of a future review”.

44. **DRs on CEPA**: Sweden, chairing the CEPA Oversight Panel, introduces **Document 17.1 Annex2 DR The new CEPA approach and Annex 3 DR The Ramsar bodies CEPA work COP14-COP15.** Parties are supportive of the new approach, replacing the Oversight Panel with a coordination group, supported by the recruitment of a CEPA officer, who should facilitate working more in partnerships and integrating CEPA work better into other DRs.

45. **DR on youth**: Switzerland introduces **Document 24.12 DR Strengthening Ramsar connections through youth.** Parties are supportive of having youth observers more engaged in the work of the Convention in all countries and suggest that synergies could be sought with the focus of the work of the Junior Professionals (regional assistants) in the Secretariat. Several Parties are skeptical on having youth formally engaged at the global level, beyond the instructions by the Parties.

46. **DR on wetland education**: The Secretariat introduces **Document 24.6 DR on Wetland education in the formal education sector on behalf of the proponent.** Parties are supportive of this DR, suggesting that specific roles for the CEPA Oversight Panel (or its successor, cf. Document 17.1) should be defined and that intensifying wetland themes in the education sector could be introduced stepwise, focusing on more technical details at a later stage.

47. **DR Ramsar Wetland Award**: Sweden introduces **Document 24.7 DR Ramsar Wetlands Award.** Parties wish to clarify better the different roles of the COP and Standing Committee: The COP provides a long-term framework and external visibility, while leaving to Standing Committee some flexibility when selecting the winners, but avoiding different decisions taken at each COP. Unless some Parties would want to change the process in the future, the COP does not need to take further decisions, and no regular Resolutions are needed.

48. Belgium, seconded by many other Parties, thanks Sweden for its enormous work to elaborate different DRs with pragmatic solutions that aim to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention and its operational procedures.

**SESSION 5**

**29 April 2022 online 14:00-17:00**

49. **EU restoration targets**: The European Commission (DG Environment, Natural Capital and Ecosystems Unit) presents the draft EU Regulation on legally binding, area-based nature restoration targets, its relevance for wetland restoration and objectives shared with the Convention on Wetlands, notably the wider agendas of contributing to overall environmental resilience, global food supply and reducing disaster risks. The Secretary General explains the Convention’s involvement in the preparation of the new Global Biodiversity Framework and its contributions including to measure changes in the extent of wetland ecosystems (as co-custodian of SDG indicator 6.6.1), and the opportunity to support Parties for this as well as to identify wetland restoration priority sites. Parties hope that this new EU Regulation, binding for all member states, can be adopted soon, after some initial delays in the timetable.

50. **DR city accreditation**: Austria, on behalf of the Independent Advisory Committee, introduces **Document 24.8 DR Updating Wetland City Accreditation and informs that at COP14, likely applications from 25 new cities in 9 different Parties will be accredited.** Parties support the updates for the operation of the accreditation scheme, considering it an amazing venture with great returns in terms of visibility and adherence for a modest investment by the
committee, largely supported by the Republic of Korea, and with limited involvement by the Secretariat. The Secretary General agrees that the Wetland City Accreditation had an important media impact at COP13 and that an appropriate place for such a ceremony is planned, together with the Chinese hosts, for COP14.

51. The European Commission (DG Environment) briefly reports on the EU policy for urban ecosystems and biodiversity, highlighting possible synergies with the Convention on Wetlands in the framework of the new Regulation on nature restoration targets, as part of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, focusing much on cities and local planning.

52. Then, the Secretariat introduces two DRs which were not covered earlier in the agenda, starting with Document 15 DR Roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, already addressed under agenda item 5 above.

53. DR visibility for the Convention: The Secretariat introduces Document 16 DR Enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies with other multilateral environment agreements and other international institutions. Several Parties underline the importance of such visibility, synergies and cooperation with other international partners, including the strengthening of regional cooperation at European scale, e.g. with the Berne Convention, and easing the reporting burden among the different international instruments. Parties ask for information on the Secretariat engagement with the Joint Work Plan Ramsar-CBD. They suggest to organise a common workshop on reporting to different Conventions.

9- Regional meetings at COP14

54. The Secretariat informs that 1.5 days immediately before the opening of COP14 (21 and 22 November 2022) will be reserved for regional meetings at the same location as COP14. Parties are invited to define the agendas for these meetings. On a daily basis during the COP, the regional groups will have the opportunity to meet. For Europe this will be joint meetings of the 27 EU Member States together with the 21 non-EU European Parties, early morning prior to the opening of the plenary session. Parties request to have rooms available for regional meetings at all times.

10- Report of the Europe Pre-COP14 Meeting

55. Referring to the request at the beginning of the Meeting by the UK, cf. paragraph 6 above, the Secretary General informs that there are no restrictions any longer in place in Switzerland, nor in the IUCN building, related to the Covid19-pandemic, and that the resumed 59th session of Standing Committee on 23-27 May 2022 is planned as a face to face meeting. Notifications were sent since December 2021 and no request for a different approach had been received. She reports that most members of the SC are registered and that arrangements have been made including travel and accommodation of sponsored delegates. Several Parties strongly express their wish to have SC59 to be held as a hybrid meeting, as was the case with recent CITES and CBD meetings. The Secretary General notes that in other regional consultations, other regions expressed their wish not to have virtual negotiations on hybrid settings. She proposes that the meeting could be live-broadcasted, as it was done with other similar meetings, such as the recent CITES SC and the CBD Geneva meetings, to enable additional observer Parties to listen and follow the proceedings. Given the difference of views among regions, the Secretary General will bring the proposal from the European region to the Executive Team to get instructions to the Secretariat on this matter.

56. The Secretariat has taken notes of the Meeting and informs that concise draft Minutes will be shared after the Meeting with all participants, inviting them to provide possible
corrections and improvements, before the final version of the Meeting Minutes will be published on the website of the Convention.

57. France informs that the EU Working Party on International Environmental Issues (WPIEI) will prepare consolidated EU positions re Ramsar issues tabled for SC59, during a meeting on 13 May that will subsequently be shared with all 48 European Ramsar Parties.

58. Parties ask if a “Plan B” is envisaged for COP14, if Covid-related restrictions would be in place in November? The Secretary General informs that such information has not been provided and that the Secretariat is actively planning a face to face COP14, as instructed by the third extraordinary meeting of the COP. Meetings of the Subgroup on COP14 are planned on 5 May and on 23 May at the resumed session of SC59, providing an opportunity for further discussion on COP14 preparations. Parties insist on the importance of having COP14 taking place in 2022 with no further delay.

59. After the Meeting, France provides for inclusion in these Minutes a table that lists a number of DRs which specific Parties have indicated to be willing to analyse in further detail in preparation of SC59 and COP14. The table is accessible here (shared Google doc). Please add your country, if you wish to participate in any of the ad hoc working groups.

11- Closing remarks by the chair

60. The chair thanks everybody for their constructive engagement in the substantial exchanges and debates and encourages Parties to prepare themselves well for the resumed session of SC59 with a loaded agenda, as well as for the subsequent COP14.