

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

21st Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 19-24 October 1998

Decisions taken at the 21st Meeting of the Standing Committee

For each of the decisions, reference is made to the full minutes of the meeting for context and explanation.

Draft Work Programme for 1999 (See paragraphs 30 to 34 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.1: The Bureau's proposed Work Programme for 1999 was approved by consensus.

Regions within Ramsar, Standing Committee composition, STRP

Regional categorization (See paragraphs 35 to 76 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.2: The Standing Committee determined to forward for consideration by COP7 the proposed draft decision on regional categorization, as amended by the Subgroup on Categorization, including the two bracketed proposals by the majority and by the Islamic Republic of Iran, together with Annex I in alternative versions, and Annex II.

Composition of and membership in the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
(See paragraphs 79 to 86 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.3: The Standing Committee determined by consensus that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel representation should mirror that of the composition of the Standing Committee, and adopted the text of the proposed draft decision for transmission to the COP, without the suggested names of nominees. These will be recommended by the Conference Committee at COP7.

Communications and Training

Wetland Conservation Award (See paragraphs 88 to 90 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.3: The Standing Committee agreed to award the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award jointly to Professor Vitaly G. Krivenko (Russian Federation) and Victor Pulido (Peru) in the individual category, jointly to the Lake Naivasha Riparian Association (Kenya) and the Society for Protection of Prespa (Greece) in the NGO category, and to the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (Canada) in the government organization category, and to adopt the diploma and piece of art proposed by the Bureau for presentation to each of the laureates.

New graphic identity (See paragraphs 91 to 97 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.4: The Standing Committee adopted the new Ramsar logo designed by Saatchi and Saatchi and decided that the Bureau should launch it on 1 January 1999 by appropriate means.

Ramsar Center proposal from Panama (See paragraphs 103 to 111 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.5: The Standing Committee supported the initiative of the Government of Panama to create, in the City of Knowledge, the Ramsar Center for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere; welcomed the support of countries inside and outside the region; urged further support from Contracting Parties; and urged the Secretary General to support Panama in furthering this initiative.

Ramsar Outreach Programme (See paragraphs 112 to 121 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.6: The Standing Committee decided to approve the Outreach Programme in draft COP7 DOC. 13 in principle, to be further developed for the COP7 Technical Session III, and endorsed the proposal to urge Contracting Parties to establish national Education, Public Awareness, and Communications (EPAC) focal points.

Preparations for Ramsar COP7

Revised Rules of Procedure for the COP (See paragraphs 139 to 147 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.7: The Standing Committee endorsed the proposed Rules of Procedure, with the agreed amendments. (The approved text is attached to these minutes.)

COP decisions (See paragraphs 149 to 152 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.8: The Standing Committee determined that the Convention will continue to make the distinction between resolutions and recommendations in official terminology, and may use the generic term “decisions” in the Rules of Procedure to refer to both.

National Reports and the preparation of Regional Overviews (See paragraphs 153 to 155 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.9: The Standing Committee endorsed the Bureau’s proposed method for creating and presenting the Regional Overviews at COP7 based upon the National Reports.

The WCMC feasibility study on harmonized information management infrastructure for the five biodiversity-related conventions (See paragraphs 156 to 161 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.9: The Standing Committee endorsed the Bureau’s intention to progress its cooperation in the WCMC proposals for the development of harmonized convention information resources and a lessons-learned network, and endorsed in principle the

WCMC recommendations on streamlined national reporting. The Committee requested the Bureau to prepare an agenda paper and draft decision for COP7 on follow-through with the WCMC harmonization project and urged that the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification, and possibly the Bern Convention, be encouraged to participate in the project. The Committee authorized the Chairperson to approve the draft decision to be sponsored by the SC to COP7, after the Bureau has circulated the draft decision to all SC members for comment.

Report of the Standing Committee to COP7 (See paragraph 162 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.10: The Standing Committee accepted the draft Standing Committee report, to be finalized and transmitted to the COP.

Report of the Secretary General or Ramsar Bureau (See paragraph 175 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.11: The Standing Committee endorsed the proposed structure of the Bureau's report to the COP, which should be presented as the Report of the Secretary General.

Rules of acceptance of NGO partners (See paragraphs 176 to 181 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.12: The Standing Committee determined to adopt the proposed draft decision for COP7 and new rules for acceptance of new partner organizations, with the inclusion of Australia's amendments to the wording.

Vision for the Ramsar List (See paragraphs 185 to 195 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.13: The Standing Committee endorsed the approach being undertaken by the Bureau to provide Parties with improved Criteria and guidance for their application, and endorsed the further development of COP7 DOC. 13.3 on a Vision for the Ramsar List and associated draft decision. The Committee encouraged the Bureau and others to continue their work on the document and draft decision, possibly through a small workshop in the near future.

Decision SC21.14: The Standing Committee endorsed the work being done on guidelines for designating karst and other subterranean hydrological systems and encouraged further development upon it.

Framework for developing National Wetland Policies (See paragraphs 196 to 200 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.15: The Standing Committee endorsed the draft decision on National Wetland Policies and its annex and agreed to sponsor the draft decision for the COP.

Guidelines for review of laws and institutions (See paragraphs 201 to 204 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.16: The Standing Committee agreed to endorse the draft decision and annexed guidelines on review of laws and institutions and to sponsor them for transmission to the COP.

Guidelines on local communities and indigenous people (See paragraphs 205 to 207 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.17: The Standing Committee endorsed the draft Guidelines and agreed to sponsor the draft decision (with the minor changes in the text requested) to the COP.

Status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Ramsar Convention (See paragraphs 225 to 276 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.18: Based on Resolution No. 777 of the Security Council, dated 19 September 1992, and UN General Assembly Resolution No. 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Standing Committee decided to:

- 1) instruct the Bureau to request that the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs within UNESCO (as the depositary of the Convention) clarify the status of the current Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with regard to the Ramsar Convention, based on the stipulations of the text of the Convention and in the light of international law; and
- 2) instruct the Bureau to prepare a conference paper transmitting the results of the clarification sought in Point 1) to the Conference of the Parties as part of the COP7 documentation.

Ramsar and water (See paragraphs 277 to 278 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.19: The Standing Committee decided to endorse the approach being taken to highlight the issue of 'Ramsar and water' in COP7 Technical Sessions I and V, including the preparation of draft COP decisions adopting guidance on river basin management and international cooperation for shared wetlands and river basins.

Wetland Risk Assessment Framework (See paragraphs 279 to 284 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.20: The Standing Committee decided to endorse submitting the draft decision and annex on Wetland Risk Assessment Framework, as contained in SC21 DOC. 10.7(n), to COP7.

Guidelines for international cooperation under the Convention (See paragraphs 285 to 290 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.21: The Standing Committee decided to establish a drafting group composed of representatives of Argentina (subject to confirmation), Australia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Switzerland, Uganda, the USA, BirdLife International, Wetlands International, and WWF. The group was

charged, together with the Bureau, with producing a more complete draft of guidelines for international cooperation, as well as a draft decision, for submission to COP7.

Synergy with other environment-related treaties (See paragraphs 291 to 302 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.22: The Standing Committee noted and endorsed the Joint Work Plan with CBD, the planned signature of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the continued development of appropriate text in the draft 'Guidelines for international cooperation' being developed for discussion at COP7.

Advance preparation of a draft decision on specific Ramsar sites that are under threat; Review of Montreux Record (See paragraphs 304 to 319 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.23: The Standing Committee endorsed the Bureau's approach to the development of COP7 DOC. 13.1 on review of the description and management of Ramsar sites and agreed to recommend to COP7 the renaming of the 'Management Guidance Procedure' to 'Ramsar Advisory Mission'. The proposal for a change in name for the Montreux Record was not supported, but the need for a positive, proactive approach to this tool was reinforced.

Guidelines to Contracting Parties on the submission of draft decisions (See paragraphs 320 to 322 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.24: The Standing Committee requested the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee members and Bureau to make every possible effort to ensure that draft COP7 Recommendations and Resolutions are prepared as far in advance as possible, and that texts on similar or overlapping themes are coordinated. The Standing Committee did not consider that additional formal guidance was needed, beyond that contained in the revised Rules of Procedure.

Finance issues

Budget outcome for 1997 and projections to December 1998 (See paragraphs 340 to 341 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.25: The Standing Committee authorized the Secretary General to employ the excess amount of money in the Reserve Fund to help defray costs of the secretariat's services for COP7 if required.

The Bureau's proposed budget for 1999 (See paragraph 343 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.26: The Standing Committee accepted the Bureau's proposed budget for 1999.

Small Grants Fund, 1998 allocations (See paragraphs 344 to 359 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.27: The Standing Committee adopted the list of allocations presented by the Subgroup on Finance for allocations from the Ramsar Small Grants Fund (as attached to the minutes).

Budget for COP7 (See paragraphs 360 to 366 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.28: The Standing Committee endorsed the charging of a fee of US\$ 100 per delegate to COP7, at the discretion of the host country, with no precedent for future meetings of the Conferences of the Parties.

Decision SC21.29: The Standing Committee resolved to send a letter to the Government of Costa Rica inviting a cash contribution to the Trust Fund established for COP7, in order to ensure that all obligations related to hosting the Conference will be met.

Proposed format for the 2000-2002 Work Programme (See paragraph 368 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.30: The Standing Committee endorsed the new format for the 2000-2002 Work Programme proposed by the Bureau.

Proposed core budget for the triennium 2000-2002 (See paragraphs 369 to 389 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.31: The Standing Committee agreed to bring forward for consideration by COP7 the revised minimum core budget for the next triennium (5% increase the first year, 2% the next, and 2% the next).

Review of the Small Grants Fund (See paragraphs 391 to 392 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.32: The Standing Committee decided that the document on “Critical evaluation of the Small Grants Fund” and its recommendations, with further improvements and noting the Subgroup on Finance’s amendments, and with a draft decision, will be recommended to the Conference of the Parties.

Minimum dues for Contracting Parties, and the issue of unpaid dues (See paragraphs 393 to 410 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.33: The Standing Committee decided to recommend to COP7 that a minimum annual contribution of Contracting Parties should be established at SFR 1,000 as of 1 January 2000.

Decision SC21.34: The Standing Committee determined to pass over the question of sanctions for Parties with unpaid dues with no action.

Alternatives to the UN scale of assessments (See paragraph 411 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.35: The Standing Committee decided to recommend to the COP that the Convention should continue to use the UN scale of assessments for determining the financial contributions of Contracting Parties to the Convention's budget.

Other matters

Legal status of IUCN in Switzerland (See paragraphs 412 to 413 of the minutes)

Decision SC21.36: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretary General to follow closely the IUCN's negotiations with the Government of Switzerland concerning its legal status and, if need be, to explore the possibilities of separate legal status for the Ramsar Bureau in Switzerland, whilst maintaining its service arrangement with IUCN.

Approval of the minutes of the meeting

Decision SC21.37: The Standing Committee approved the minutes of the first two and a half days of its 21st meeting, with editorial polishing and the incorporation of amendments communicated to the rapporteur, and empowered the Chairperson to approve the last half day's minutes on the Committee's behalf.

Next meeting of the Standing Committee

Decision SC21.38: The 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee will take place immediately prior to the opening of the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, on 9 May 1999, from 9.00 - 18.00 hours, at the Herradura Hotel, in San José, Costa Rica.