

22nd Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Hotel Herradura (Room "Girasol"), San José, Costa Rica
Sunday, 9 May 1999, 09.00 – 17.00 hours

Provisional Annotated Agenda

1. Welcoming remarks by the Chairperson and a representative of the host country
2. Brief report on the status of arrangements for Ramsar COP7 by
 - a) the Secretary General
 - b) the Coordinator, Ramsar COP7 Office, Ministry of Environment and Energy
3. Proposed changes in the Conference programme:

a) Additional plenary session on Tuesday 11 May, 19.30 – 21.30 hours

The Secretary General proposes to add this evening session in order to deal with Proposal 1, contained in Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.1: *Regional categorization of countries under the Convention, and composition, roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, including tasks of Standing Committee members.*

This proposal could be considered together with all other proposals under Agenda Item XIII in the Plenary Session of Wednesday, 12 May, from 15.00 – 18.30 hours, when some 15 proposals (besides the 16 proposals to be considered by the Technical Sessions) must be reviewed.

In view of the fact, however, that in Proposal No.1 the Standing Committee has transmitted to the Conference two alternatives about regional categorization in square brackets, the discussion of these two alternatives may require a considerable amount of time. The best way to have available the required time to do so would seem to be by adding the proposed evening plenary session to the schedule.

b) Contact Groups

A number of the issues and proposals that will be discussed during the COP include detailed guidelines which would benefit from more discussion time. Consequently, the Bureau considers that Contracting Parties and interested observers should be given the opportunity to discuss these issues in more detail than would otherwise be possible under the approved Agenda.

To provide this opportunity, it is proposed that six open-ended Contact Groups be established to initiate discussions on the following issues:

Contact Group 1: the Convention Work Plan and Budget 2000-2002 (Ramsar COP7 DOC. 14 and 14 - Add 1)

Contact Group 2: the Strategic framework for the Ramsar List, including the draft resolution on karsts (Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.11 and 15.13).

Contact Group 3: National wetland policies, and law and institutions (Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.6 and 15.7)

Contact Group 4: Community participation and the Outreach Programme (Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.8 and 15.9)

Contact Group 5: International Cooperation and synergies with other conventions (Ramsar COP7 15.4 and 15.20)

Contact Group 6: Wetlands and river basin management, including other water-related issues (Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.19)

Each Contact Group could meet at all or some of the following times:

Tuesday, 11 May: 13.30 –14.50

Wednesday, 12 May: a) 07.30 – 08.50; b) 13.30 – 14.50; and c) 19.00 –21.00

Thursday, 13 May: a) 07.30 – 08.50; and b) 13.30 – 14.50

NOTE: The suggested Contact Groups would be different from the ones that could later be established as a result of the debates in the Discussion Groups during the Technical Sessions (see Ramsar COP7 DOC. 29: Programme and operations of the Technical Sessions)

It will not be possible to provide interpretation at the Contact Groups. Consequently, it is expected that most of them would operate in English, though the each group may decide to use Spanish or French as the main language or make arrangements to use a mixture of these languages.

The Contact Groups are meant to advance the discussions that will take place in the regionally-based Discussion Groups that are an integral part of the Technical Sessions. Consequently the views and proposals (if any) from the Contact Groups should be transmitted to the Discussion Groups. Exceptionally, a report could be presented to the appropriate panels that are planned at the beginning of each Technical Session.

The views and proposals from Contact Group 1 on programme and budget would be transmitted directly to the plenary, since these are not Technical Session issues.

It is proposed that the Chairperson of the Standing Committee chair Contact Group 1 on programme and budget. In anticipation of a possible approval of this proposal by the Standing Committee, the Ramsar Bureau is consulting with the Chairpersons of the five Technical Sessions to invite them to consider also chairing Contact Groups 2 to 6, in order to ensure the link between the Contact Groups and the Technical Sessions. Alternatively, they could nominate another delegate to chair the related Contact Group in their place. The Bureau will assign a staff member to follow and serve each one of the Contact Groups.

Meeting rooms for the six Contact Groups have been arranged at the Cariari Hotel (8 minutes walk from the Conference Centre), and pre-arrangements are being made to

provide (early or late) transportation for delegates who would wish to participate in these meetings.

If the Standing Committee approves this proposal, the Bureau will prepare an information document on the Contact Groups for distribution on Monday 10 May, and a formal announcement should be made during the plenary session on that day.

4. Agenda Item V of Ramsar COP7: Election of the President and Vice-Presidents

Rule 21 of the proposed Rules of Procedure states:

1. At the commencement of the first session of each ordinary meeting, a President and two Vice-Presidents shall be elected from among the representatives of the Parties present at the meeting, on the basis of a proposal put forward by the Conference Committee. In preparing its proposal on this matter, the Conference Committee shall consider first the candidate(s) put forward by the host country of the meeting for the post of President of the meeting.

The Chairperson has requested the Secretary General to undertake informal consultations on her behalf on this matter. As a result of these consultations, the Chairperson intends to propose that the Standing Committee, acting already as Conference Committee, put forward the following proposal to the Conference:

President of the Conference:

Ms Elizabeth Odio Benito, Second Vice President of the Republic of Costa Rica and Minister of Environment and Energy

Vice Presidents:

Mr. Veit Koester, Head of the Danish Delegation
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (Asia or Africa)

5. Agenda Item VI of Ramsar COP7: Appointment of the Credentials Committee and any other Committees

Rule 19 of the proposed Rules of Procedure states:

A Credentials Committee composed of one Party from each of the Ramsar regions, elected at the first session of each ordinary meeting on the basis of a proposal from the Conference Committee, shall examine the credentials and submit its report to the Conference of the Parties for approval.

The Chairperson proposes that in order to have a Credentials Committee that can begin its work immediately, the current Ramsar regions should be used as the basis for its composition. Consequently, and following informal consultations undertaken by the Secretary General on her behalf, the Chairperson submits the following proposal for the composition of the Credentials Committee:

Africa: Togo

Asia: Mongolia (pending)

Eastern Europe:

Neotropics: Guatemala (pending)

North America: Canada (pending)

Oceania: Australia (pending)

Western Europe:

6. Conference report

Bearing in mind that the main products of the COP are the decisions adopted by each COP meeting, the Secretary General proposes that the Conference Report of Ramsar COPs be brought in line with those of other environment-related conventions administered by the UN. Their conference reports are simpler, and thus less labour-intensive and resource-consuming, than the reports prepared so far for Ramsar COPs.

The production of the Conference Report at the Brisbane Conference represented a very demanding effort on the part of the rapporteurs and the Secretary General who, in Ramsar, is in the end responsible for the text submitted to the Conference Committee for approval.

Thus, producing a more streamlined report will be helpful during the Conference and a considerable saving of resources when it later comes to translation, copying and distribution.

A copy of the Report approved by COP1 of the Convention to Combat Desertification will be made available to the Committee as a possible example to follow.

7. Opening ceremony and other formal/social occasions: report on preparations

8. Composition and modus operandi of the Conference Committee

Rule 26 of the proposed Rules of Procedure states:

1. The voting members of the Standing Committee of the Convention shall constitute the Conference Committee, which shall also include the elected President and Vice Presidents of the current meeting. Observers may be invited to attend meetings of the Conference Committee, if required. The Conference Committee shall be chaired by the chairperson of the Standing Committee during the period previous to the current meeting.

2. The Conference Committee shall meet at least once daily to review the progress of the meeting, including the draft of the report of the previous day prepared by the Secretariat, and to provide advice to the President in order to ensure the smooth development of the rest of the proceedings.

It is proposed that the Conference Committee should meet daily from Tuesday 11 May from 08.00 to 08.50 at the Room "Girasol" of the Herradura Hotel.

8. Any other business