

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

**26th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 December 2001**

Decisions of the 26th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 10: Ramsar's participation in the UN environmental processes

(See document SC26-6(b) on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_06b.htm.)

Decision SC26-1: The Standing Committee agreed that the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa should be invited to address the COP8 plenary on the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, that the Bureau should prepare an analysis of the WSSD outcomes as an official document for the COP, and that a draft Resolution should be prepared urging Ramsar follow-up to the WSSD outcomes.

Agenda item 11: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

(See document SC26-7 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_07.htm.)

Decision SC26-2: The Standing Committee endorsed the "Terms of Reference for STRP Millennium Assessment focal points" as adopted by Decision STRP 10.1 at the 10th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.

Agenda item 12.2: Ramsar Regional and Subregional Meetings

The report of the Eastern and Southern Africa meeting indicated a need for an increased Ramsar presence in the region. It was suggested that an "honorary Ramsar officer", suitably qualified, be appointed to represent the Convention in the Nile River Initiative activities

Decision SC26-3: The Standing Committee endorsed the appointment an "honorary Ramsar officer", suitably qualified, to represent the Convention in the Nile River Initiative activities under the supervision of the Bureau's Regional Coordinator for Africa and the SG.

Agenda item 12.3 (a) (ii): Review of Ramsar site boundaries for reasons other than national interests

(See document SC26/COP8-2 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_02.htm.)

Decision SC26-4: The Standing Committee appointed a Contact Group consisting of Australia (Chair), Japan, the USA, BirdLife International, and WWF, and Argentina and the UK subject to confirmation, to craft two Resolutions for the Subgroup meeting in May 2002, one on boundary definition and another calling for future discussion of the issues of Ramsar sites no longer fulfilling the Criteria for designation.

Agenda item 12.3 (b) (i): Guidelines on allocation and management of water

(See document SC26/COP8-3 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_03.htm.)

Decision SC26-5: The Standing Committee adopted the draft Resolution and guidelines on water allocation and management, with the addition of text on water pollution, fish passage, dry cycles

and seasonability. It determined that the background paper will be submitted to COP8 as a formal information paper in the three languages.

Agenda item 12.3 (b) (ii): Climate change and wetlands

(See document SC26/COP8-4 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_04.htm.)

Decision SC26-6: The Standing Committee authorized the finalization of the draft Resolution and its “key issues” annex, and the background paper, for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 in May 2002.

Decision SC26-7: The Standing Committee determined that it will delegate to the Subgroup on COP8 the authority to approve documents for COP8 at its meeting in May 2002, and that all of the documents to be considered at that meeting will be circulated to all Standing Committee members at the time of circulation to the Subgroup in order to provide an opportunity for comment. All Contracting Parties will be welcome to attend the Subgroup’s May meeting as observers if they wish to, and the draft agenda will be formally transmitted to them in advance.

Agenda item 12.3 (b) (iii): Principles and guidelines on integrated coastal zone management

(See document SC26/COP8-5 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_05.htm.)

Decision SC26-8: The Standing Committee approved the finalization of the Principles and guidance document on integrated coastal zone management for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (b) (iv): Synergies with other conventions

(See document SC26/COP8-6 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_06.htm.)

Decision SC26-9: The Standing Committee requested that the Bureau prepare a draft Resolution for the Subgroup on COP8 meeting in May 2002, taking into account all developments of interest to Ramsar that may have occurred in the UNEP-led process on International Environmental Governance and other developments related to interactions between Ramsar and other environmental conventions in the meantime.

Agenda 12.3 (c) (i): Framework for wetland inventory

(See document SC26/COP8-7 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_07.htm.)

Decision SC26-10: The Standing Committee adopted the draft Resolution and annexed Framework for Wetland Inventory for transmittal to COP8, following the addition of a table on metadata standards and an example from Ecuador.

Agenda item 12.3 (c) (ii): Gaps and harmonization of Ramsar guidance on ecological character

(See document SC26/COP8-8 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_08.htm.)

Decision SC26-11: The Standing Committee approved the proposal that STRP draft a Resolution on gaps and disharmonies in existing Ramsar guidance on ecological character, with prioritization in favor of practical matters, and that it prepare a “Wetland Ecosystem Assessment Framework”, both for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (c) (iii): Proposed guidance on reporting change or likely change in ecological character

(See document SC26/COP8-9 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_09.htm.)

Decision SC26-12: The Standing Committee requested that the Bureau and the STRP prepare a discussion paper on Article 3.2 and the reporting of change in ecological character, both human- and naturally-caused changes, for the Subgroup on COP8's meeting in May 2002. The discussion paper should incorporate elements of a possible draft Resolution for the Subgroup's consideration.

Agenda item 12.3 (c) (iv): Impact assessment

(See document SC26/COP8-10 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_10.htm.)

Decision SC26-13: The Standing Committee encouraged the STRP's Working Group to finalize a draft Resolution on impact assessment and a document for the Parties which will interpret the CBD's Guidelines in the Ramsar and wetland context.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (i): Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List

Following requests from the Ramsar Subregional meetings in South America and in Eastern and Southern Africa that Standing Committee consider the question of adopting a new criterion for identifying Wetlands of International Importance based upon their cultural and socio-economic values, the Committee determined to pursue the matter further through discussions at the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Decision SC26-14: The Standing Committee determined to have a broad-ranging discussion on the role of cultural and socio-economic issues in the Convention, and on how to enhance that role, and requested the preparation of a discussion document to facilitate talks at COP8. Uganda was invited to work with the Bureau, the Chair of STRP and any other Party and IOP interested to contribute, in the preparation of the discussion paper.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (i): Convergence between Ramsar and CBD criteria and classification

(See document SC26-25 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_25.htm.)

Decision SC26-15: The Standing Committee determined that the discussion paper on cultural and socio-economic issues cited in the previous decision should also examine the CBD's suggestions and the extent to which they might make expansion of the Ramsar Criteria desirable.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (ii): Guidelines for the designation of under-represented wetland types

(See document SC26/COP8-11 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_11.htm.)

Decision SC26-16: The Standing Committee approved the Guidelines document on peatlands, mangroves, coral reefs, and wet grasslands for transmittal to COP8, with the proviso that it should be shortened and sharpened as appropriate.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (iii): Guidelines for the designation of mountain wetlands

(See document SC26/COP8-12 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_12.htm.)

Decision SC26-17: The Standing Committee determined to send the proposed Resolution and guidelines back to its originators, France and WWF, with a request that the concerns about the

definition of mountain wetlands and other issues be addressed prior to the Subgroup on COP8's meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (iv): The Ramsar Sites Database and official and unofficial site data

(See document SC26/COP8-13 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_13.htm.)

Decision SC26-18: The Standing Committee approved the preparation of a paper and draft Resolution on the possible admission of unimpeachable unofficial data to the Ramsar Sites Database.

Agenda item 12.3 (d) (v): The Ramsar Data Gateway

The Ramsar Data Gateway project, under development within a NASA-sponsored project by the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) of Columbia University, New York, USA, in cooperation with Wetlands International and the Ramsar Bureau, is intended to provide Web-based access to Ramsar sites data for the public. A work-in-progress test site is available at <http://sedac.ciesin.org/ramsardg>.

Decision SC26-19: The Standing Committee agreed that the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) should be invited to make a presentation of the Ramsar Data Gateway at COP8.

Agenda item 12.3 (e) (i): New Guidelines on management planning

(See document SC26/COP8-14 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_14.htm.)

Decision SC26-20: The Standing Committee approved the draft New Guidelines on Management Planning, subject to the inclusion of further text concerning the relationship between site-based management planning and wider basin scale planning and mosaic wetland systems, as well as elaboration of the guidance on evaluation of features other than ecological character, for translation and circulation to the Parties for comment in advance of the Subgroup on COP8's meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (e) (ii): Guidelines for global action on peatlands

(See document SC26/COP8-15 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_15.htm.)

Decision SC26-21: The Standing Committee adopted the draft Guidelines for global action on peatlands for transmittal to the COP, with the addition of a definition of peatlands at the beginning.

Agenda item 12.3 (e) (iii): Resolution on the report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD)

(See document SC26/COP8-16 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_16.htm.)

Decision SC26-22: The Standing Committee approved the finalization of a draft Resolution and STRP annex which summarizes the WCD report and its recommendations in the Ramsar and wetland context, for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (e) (iv): Resolution on invasive species

(See document SC26/COP8-17 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_17.htm.)

Decision SC26-23: The Standing Committee approved the finalization of a draft Resolution and additional Ramsar guidance on the use of the proposed CBD Guiding Principles [Guidelines] on this matter for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (f) (i): Guiding principles on the cultural aspects of wetlands

(See document SC26/COP8-18 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_18.htm.)

Decision SC26-24: The Standing Committee approved the finalization of the Guiding Principles on cultural values for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12.3 (g): Wetland restoration

(See document SC26/COP8-19 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_19.htm.)

Decision SC26-25: The Standing Committee approved the Principles and guidelines for wetland restoration for transmittal to COP8, with the Subgroup's recommended alteration.

Agenda item 12.3 (h): Incentive measures

(See document SC26/COP8-20 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_20.htm.)

Decision SC26-26: The Standing Committee adopted the proposed draft Resolution, with additional wording by Argentina, for transmittal to COP8.

Agenda item 12.3 (i): Possible changes in the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS)

(See document SC26/COP8-21 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_21.htm.)

Decision SC26-27: The Standing Committee approved the drafting of a Resolution by STRP on recommended changes in the Ramsar Information Sheet for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 at its meeting in May 2002.

Agenda item 12 (j): The San José Record

(See document SC26/COP8-22 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_22.htm.)

Decision SC26-28: The Standing Committee adopted the proposal for a San José Record for transmittal to COP8, with the addition of France's suggestion that the Administrative Authorities be involved in the pre-nomination phase.

Agenda item 12 (k): The *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

Decision SC26-29: The Standing Committee approved the revised *modus operandi* for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, as well as the draft Resolution accompanying it, and the Terms of Reference for the review of STRP's links with other science networks.

(See document SC26/COP8-23 Revision 1 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_23rev1.htm.)

Agenda item 12.3 (l): Unpaid Contracting Party contributions

(See document SC26/COP8-24 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_24.htm.)

Decision SC26-30: The Standing Committee determined that the issue of sanctions for unpaid contributions should not be taken forward at this time and that further discussions would be left for the future.

Agenda item 12.3 (m): The draft Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008

(See document SC26/COP8-25 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_25.htm.)

Decision SC26-31: The Standing Committee instructed the Bureau to implement the recommendations of the Subgroup on the Strategic Plan and produce a fifth draft, with square brackets round all new issues, for circulation to the Standing Committee by the end of December, with comments to be returned by 15 January 2002. After incorporation of comments received, the Bureau should produce the sixth draft in the three languages for circulation in an attractive format to all the Parties by mid-March, with the brackets retained. The Parties should be asked to provide their tentative national targets to the Bureau by 31 August 2002 to allow time for a new document for COP8 which includes global targets. The Committee expressed gratitude to the Subgroup for its work.

Agenda item 12.3 (n): The Convention's Work Plan 2003-2005

(See document SC26/COP8-26 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_26.htm.)

Decision SC26-32: The Standing Committee requested the Bureau to establish a draft Convention's Work Plan 2003-2005 for the consideration of COP8 following the receipt of comments and tentative national targets on the draft Strategic Plan on 31 August 2002.

Agenda item 13: The Bureau's Work Plan 2002

(See document SC26-8 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_08.htm.)

Decision SC26-33: The Standing Committee approved the Bureau's Work Plan for 2002, with the amendments proposed by Japan. The Committee welcomed WWF's suggestions for increased attention to the South Pacific region, noting France's caution about constraints in influencing overseas territories and Australia's intention to follow up on the suggested actions.

Further business concerning planned Technical Sessions for COP8

Decision SC26-34: The Standing Committee approved the revised agenda for COP8 Technical Sessions as shown in DOC. SC26-30.

(See document SC26-30 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_30.htm.)

Further business concerning the draft Resolution and guidance on Articles 2.5 and 4.2

Decision SC26-35: The Standing Committee adopted Revision 2 of DOC. SC26/COP8-1 on interpretation of "urgent national interests" under Article 2.5 and compensation under Article 4.2 for transmittal to COP8.

(See document SC26/COP8-1 Revision 2 at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_cop8_01rev2.htm.)

Agenda item 14.1: Audited accounts for FY 2000 and status of the Reserve Fund

(See document SC26-9 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_09.htm.)

Decision SC26-36: The Standing Committee received the Bureau's audited accounts for fiscal year 2000 and noted the status of the Ramsar Reserve Fund.

Agenda item 14.2: Review of 2001 core and projects income and expenditure

(See document SC26-10 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_10.htm.)

Decision SC26-37: The Standing Committee noted the review of core and projects income and expenditure for 2001.

Agenda item 14.3 (i): Approval of Small Grants Fund project proposal

(See document SC26-11 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_11.htm.)

Decision SC26-38: The Standing Committee approved funding for all Small Grants Fund proposals on the A1 list in DOC. SC26-11 and for the proposals on the A2 list in the order shown in DOC. SC26-26 if further funding should become available. The Committee expressed its thanks to WWF and Wetlands International for their support for an additional five project proposals and for their attempts to secure assistance for others.

Agenda item 14.3 (ii): Proposal to establish a Trust Fund to resource the Small Grants Fund

(See document SC26-12 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_12.htm.)

Decision SC26-39: The Standing Committee requested the Bureau to circulate the document "Proposal to establish a Trust Fund to resource the SGF" to all Parties and other appropriate institutions by 14 December 2001 inviting comments by 15 March 2002, and to prepare a report based upon these comments, including the prospects and risks involved in establishing such a Trust Fund, to be considered by the Subgroup on Finance at a meeting to be held on 15 May 2002 in conjunction with that of the Subgroup on COP8. The Committee authorized the Subgroup on Finance to submit a recommendation to Ramsar COP8, if considered appropriate after the consultation with Contracting Parties, on establishing a Ramsar Trust Fund to resource the SGF.

Agenda item 14.4: Report on practices of other environment-related conventions concerning delegate support

(See document SC26-13 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_13.htm.)

Decision SC26-40: The Standing Committee decided that, when not otherwise established by Resolutions of the Conference of Contracting Parties, the allocation of funds by the Bureau for sponsored delegates to Ramsar meetings shall be as follows:

- a) funds should be directed first to one delegate from each Ramsar Contracting Party in the UN list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs);
- b) additional funds should be allocated to one delegate from Contracting Parties that are developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
- c) in case funds are still available, they should be allocated to a second delegate from LDCs; and
- d) in case funds are still available, they should be allocated to a second delegate from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Agenda 14.5: The Bureau's budget for 2002

(See document SC26-14 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_14.htm.)

Decision SC26-41: The Standing Committee approved the Bureau's budget for 2002 as presented in DOC. SC26-14.

Decision SC26-42: The Standing Committee authorized the Bureau to send out the invoices for the 2003 contributions in May 2002, based upon the 2002 budget but using the UN scale applicable to 2003. After the approval of the 2003 budget by COP8, if the difference to be paid by a Contracting Party is more than 10% (upwards or downwards) with respect to the invoiced amount, a revised invoice should be issued in January 2003. If the difference is less than 10%, the adjustment should be made in the invoice corresponding to the 2004 contributions, which should be sent out in May 2003.

Agenda item 14.6: Proposed budget for 2003-2008 for recommendation to COP8

(See document SC26-15 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_15.htm and document SC26-26 Addendum at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_26a1.htm.)

Decision SC26-43: The Standing Committee accepted the tentative core budget for 2003-2005, as shown in DOC. SC26-26 Addendum, as a basis for further discussion, with the removal of line items with zero allocations. The SC agreed with WWF's suggestion that voluntary support be sought for the proposed Freshwater/STRP Support Officer and agreed to consult with the Subgroup on STRP Support about any possible additional needs.

Use of the official languages

Decision SC26-44: The Standing Committee requested its Subgroup on Finance to study further the question of a permanent place in the budget for interpretation in SC plenary sessions and expressed its appreciation to Spain for its generous offer to provide funding for interpretation at the meeting of the Subgroup on COP8 in May 2002.

Agenda item 15: Selection procedure for the new Secretary General

(See document SC26-16 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_16.htm.)

Decision SC26-45: The Standing Committee established the procedure and timetable outlined for the selection of a new Secretary General in DOC. SC26-16, subject to the three amendments suggested by the USA. The first selection panel will consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, and the SG (*ex officio*), and the following Regional Representatives: for Africa, Algeria; for Asia, still to be decided; for Europe, France; for the Neotropics, Argentina; for North America, Canada, with Oceania represented by the Chair of the SC. Canada will continue to represent the North American region in the second selection panel as well.

Agenda item 16: World Wetlands Day 2002 (and 2003)

(See document SC26-20 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_20.htm.)

Decision SC26-46: The Standing Committee agreed that the theme of World Wetlands Day 2003 should be associated with the United Nations' International Year of Freshwater.

Agenda item 18: Subgroup on COP8 meeting in May 2002

Decision SC26-47: The Standing Committee scheduled the meetings of the Subgroup on COP8 for Gland on 15-17 May 2002 and the Subgroup on Finance for 15 May.

Agenda item 20: Adoption of the report of the meeting.

Decision SC26-48: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the first two days of the meeting, subject to editorial amendments to be passed directly to the rapporteur, and delegated the Chair of the Standing Committee to approve the report of the third day on the Committee's behalf.

Agenda item 21 (a): Any other business: Ramsar and the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi

(See document SC26-19 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_19.htm.)

Decision SC26-49: The Standing Committee endorsed the Convention's participation in the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan, March-September 2005, if sponsorship can be found to cover the costs and a partnership can be established, mainly with Japanese institutions, for staffing the Ramsar stand.

Agenda item 21 (c): Requests for International Organization Partner status

(See document SC26-22 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_22.htm.)

Decision SC26-50: The Standing Committee expressed its interest in and appreciation for the applications for International Organization Partner status from the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Niger Basin Authority and urged that they develop memoranda of cooperation with the Bureau to allow for a period of closer formal relations, which could subsequently lead to IOP status.

Agenda item 21 (d): Progress with the Programme of Joint Work between Ramsar and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme

(See document SC26-23 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_23.htm.)

Decision SC26-51: The Standing Committee accepted the Programme of Joint Work between the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme and the Ramsar Convention.

Agenda item 21 (e)

(See document SC26-31 on the Ramsar Web site at http://ramsar.org/key_sc26_docs_31.htm.)

Decision SC26-52: The Standing Committee requested the Bureau to make the materials on the International Conference on Freshwater and the 3rd World Water Forum available to the Contracting Parties.