

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

28th meeting of the Standing Committee
Valencia, Spain, 26 November 2002

Report of the 28th Meeting of the Standing Committee

1. In attendance were all the members of the Standing Committee for 2003-2005 elected by the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002). They are as follows:

Africa: Botswana, Ghana and Morocco

Asia¹: Iran and Japan

Europe: Armenia, Austria, Romania, and Slovenia

Neotropics²: Argentina and Nicaragua

North America: Canada

Oceania: Papua New Guinea

COP8 host country: Spain

COP9 host country: Uganda

Permanent observers: Netherlands, Switzerland, BirdLife International, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Wetlands International, WWF International.

Observers: Australia, Indonesia, and the United States of America

Opening remarks

2. The Secretary General opened the meeting by congratulating all newly elected member countries to the Standing Committee. He stressed the importance of the work of the Standing Committee in the coming triennium, and that it has a large amount of work to undertake in addition to its routine business, notably in appointing the new Secretary General of the Convention, in overseeing the implementation of the new Strategic Plan and *modus operandi* of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and in implementing Resolution VIII. 45 concerning future meetings of the Conference of the Parties.
3. The Secretary General explained that there were two main tasks for this meeting of the Committee:
 - a) to elect the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Committee; and

¹ COP8 determined that owing to the accession to the Convention of Kyrgyz Republic on 13 November 2002, the number of Contracting Parties in the Asia region was now 25 and thus, in accordance with Resolution VII.1, it should appoint a third member for Asia of the Standing Committee. However, the full participation with voting rights of the third member (Indonesia) would start only when the Convention comes into force in Kyrgyz Republic on 13 March 2003.

² COP8 determined that in view of some imminent accessions to the Convention of new States from the Neotropics, as soon as the treaty comes into force for the 25th Contracting Party from this region, the Bahamas will join the Standing Committee as a third regional representative.

- b) to establish the dates of the first meeting of the Committee, in early 2003.
4. The Secretary General also advised the Committee that it could, if it so wished, elect the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, although if it this was not possible this could be done at the start of the first full business meeting of the Committee in early 2003.

Election of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee

5. The Secretary General then invited nominations for the Chair of the Committee.
6. Japan proposed Slovenia as Chair and Canada as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance. This was seconded by Armenia. These elections were approved by the Committee by acclamation.
7. Ms Gordana Beltram, representing Slovenia, took the Chair. She thanked the Committee for its confidence in Slovenia and in her personally, stressed the challenges ahead, and called on the support of all members of the Committee in helping her to progress its work.
8. The Chair then invited nominations for the post of Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
9. Japan was nominated by Armenia and seconded by Morocco, supported by Austria and Spain.
10. Japan thanked the members of the Committee for their nomination. However, Japan pointed out that although it is a Contracting Party that is elected to this post, it recognised that to secure the continuity of work of the Committee it was essential that the same representative of that Party act as the Vice-Chair for all the meetings of the Committee during the triennium, and felt that it would be difficult for Japan to make this commitment. Japan regretfully declined to accept the nomination.
11. Japan, seconded by Indonesia, then proposed the Islamic Republic of Iran as Vice-Chair of the Committee, and this was agreed by acclamation.
12. Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour, representing the I.R. of Iran, thanked all its colleagues and members of the Committee for the nomination, expressed its hope of doing the job well, and expressed its regret that Japan had felt unable to take on the role.

Decision SC28-1: In summary, the Standing Committee elected Slovenia as its Chair for the next triennium, the Islamic Republic of Iran as Vice-Chair, and Canada as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance.

Date and venue of the next meeting of the Standing Committee

13. The Secretary General explained that the Committee needs to meet as soon as possible in the triennium, but that before it meets sufficient time is required for the Bureau to prepare and circulate in advance the papers for the meeting, and that this circulation of papers would not be possible before the end of January 2003.

Decision SC28-2: The Standing Committee agreed that its next meeting should take place in the week of the 24-28 February 2003, at the seat of the Bureau in Gland, Switzerland.

14. The Selection Panel of the Standing Committee will also undertake the interviews for the formal appointment of the new Secretary General. The Selection Panel will meet on Monday 24 February and at least the morning of 25 February. The full meeting of the Standing Committee would therefore begin on the afternoon of 25 February or on the morning of 26 February. This will be confirmed at a later stage. The meeting would end on the afternoon of Friday 28 February.

Subgroup on Finance

15. The Secretary General noted that, exceptionally, the date of the first meeting of the Committee will mean that it will be asked to approve the Bureau's budget two months after the start of the year, owing to the late date in 2002 of COP8. However, in practice the Bureau's budget is the same as the Convention's budget as approved by COP8, so that this should not present any difficulties. Should any financial issues needing resolution by the Committee arise in the intervening period, he anticipated that these could be put to the Chair and members of the Subgroup on Finance.
16. Although the Subgroup on Finance usually meets for half a day prior to the full meeting of the Committee so as to address all financial issues for approval by the Committee, the Secretary General expressed the view that such a meeting would not be necessary in February 2003. However, the Subgroup will need in February 2003 to review the Bureau's accounts for 2002, and he proposed that for this purpose the Subgroup might wish to hold a short meeting in either the evening or the early morning during the Standing Committee meeting.

Decision SC28-3: The Standing Committee elected the following members to serve on the Subgroup on Finance, in addition to Canada (Chair): Argentina, Ghana, Papua New Guinea and Romania. The representatives of the Asia region will undertake further consultations and will advise the Chair of their nomination.

Selection of the new Secretary General

17. The Secretary General reminded the Committee of the procedure for selection of the new Secretary General: that a panel of members of the previous Standing Committee had met during COP8 and had selected a shortlist of five candidates for interview. Interviews would be conducted by a panel of members of the newly elected Standing Committee composed of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, a representative of each Ramsar region, and the Director General of IUCN, which acts as the formal employer under Swiss law of all Ramsar Bureau staff.
18. The USA queried whether the Committee should take the opportunity of this present meeting to identify the members of the selection panel for the post of Secretary General. The Secretary General advised that the procedure established is for the panel members to be identified by the Chair of the Committee in consultation with its regional members, and that the Committee and the chair could, if it so wished, identify its representatives now.

Decision SC28-4: The Committee agreed that the following Contracting Parties would represent their regions on the Secretary General Selection Panel: Africa: Botswana; Asia: Japan; Europe: Austria; Neotropics: Argentina; North America: Canada (acting also as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance); Oceania: Papua New Guinea

19. The USA reminded the meeting about Cuba's query in COP8 plenary concerning whether the *curricula vitae* of the short-listed candidates would be made available to all Contracting Parties in advance of the interviews.
20. The Secretary General pointed out that it would be highly exceptional for the details of candidates for the chief executive officer post of any international organization to be given global open circulation.
21. He reminded the Committee that it was its responsibility to act on behalf of all Contracting Parties during the inter-sessional periods between COPs, that they are members selected by each region to act as its representatives and had therefore agreed to accept this responsibility, and that such selection is usually undertaken by an organization's governing body (i.e. the Standing Committee). He noted that if a particular Contracting Party requested to see candidates' cvs from the relevant regional member of the Standing Committee, it would be acceptable for it to be given such access.
22. The names of the shortlisted candidates will be provided to the members of the Standing Committee within two weeks, after all candidates have been contacted.
23. Argentina requested that the Bureau supply the full application details of all candidates as soon as possible, so that it may undertake wide consultation.

Any other business

24. Japan requested guidance concerning whether and how additional Subgroups would be established for other areas of the Committee's work, noting that there would be a need to establish such a Subgroup to develop the proposals for future COPs, in response to Resolution VIII.45. The Secretary General advised that such Subgroups would be established by the Committee's meeting in February 2003, and recommended that the Committee establish a maximum of two such groups, since otherwise there would not be the time and capacity for the Committee to undertake such work owing to its small membership.
25. Uganda stated that as the host country for COP9 it will need to work very closely with the Bureau and the Standing Committee so as to ensure a successful meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
26. The Chair closed the meeting.