

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
40th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 11-15 May 2009

Decisions of the 40th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 6: Establishment of the Subgroup on COP11 and any others

Decision SC40-1: The Standing Committee established a Subgroup on COP11, with Romania as its Chair and including one SC member or designated substitute from each region. The members chosen to serve are, for Africa, Uganda; for Asia, Lebanon; for Europe, Croatia; for the Neotropics, Panama; for North America, [TBA]; and for Oceania, Marshall Islands, as well as the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 7: Report of the Management Working Group

Decision SC40-2: The Standing Committee determined that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance should continue to act as an informal intersessional “Executive Team” to support and advise the Secretary General on matters arising.

Decision SC40-3: The Standing Committee decided that for the final year of the Convention cycle (i.e., the COP year), the Secretary General’s annual performance assessment should be undertaken by the outgoing “Executive Team” in consultation with the new Executive Team. A “360 degree” review element should be continued so that Secretariat staff can contribute to this assessment. A periodic informal meeting between the SC Chair and Secretariat staff should be continued.

Decision SC40-4: The Standing Committee agreed that a general principle should be to establish continuity (past Chairs, etc.) in all Standing Committee subgroups, in particular the Subgroups on Finance and on the COP. For the STRP Oversight Committee, the former Chair of Standing Committee should be added, and for the CEPA Oversight Panel, the former Vice-Chair of Standing Committee should be added to achieve this continuity – but because, for these two groups, a COP decision will be needed to formally introduce these additions, it would be valuable to initiate this during the current cycle as “ex officio” roles, provided there are no additional cost implications.

Decision SC40-5: The Standing Committee determined that the Executive Team should be asked to review the most recent process for recruitment of any new Secretary General and a) ensure that it is fully documented and b) make any recommendations for improvements, with the advice of IUCN Human Resources staff, for consideration by Standing Committee.

Decision SC40-6: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to develop a thoroughly collaborative review with the International Organization Partners of the Convention’s relationships with the IOPs, in order to strengthen them strategically and make them more concrete and detailed, including in relation to in-country implementation support activities.

Decision SC40-7: The Standing Committee:

- i) requested the Secretariat to call a one-day meeting of development officers of INGO, etc., from the Geneva region as soon as possible. This could be focused on identifying value-added synergies in terms of fundraising for major initiative implementation through, for example, International Organization Partners, to support national capacity for wetland conservation and wise use;
- ii) requested the Secretariat, following this step, to assess whether any other means (e.g., a consultancy) of acquiring such information to focus the priorities and approach is needed to help develop further a focused strategy and Terms of Reference for the Partnership Officer post, consulting with selected business companies and private foundations as appropriate;
- iii) requested the Secretariat to develop draft Terms of Reference for the post, in the light of i) and ii) above and in relation to the general terms in Resolution X.2 Annex III, to be reviewed by the Standing Committee Chair and a small number of interested Standing Committee members and Parties (Jamaica, Japan); and
- iv) determined that, under this scenario, funds allocated in the 2009 core budget for the partnership development would need to be carried over to the 2010 budget in order to be able to support a full-time officer for 2010 onwards, noting that a small amount of the funds will be needed in 2009 to cover the costs of i) and ii) above.

Agenda items 8.1 and 8.2: Audited accounts for 2008 and status of the Reserve Fund

Decision SC40-8: The Standing Committee approved the 2008 audited accounts as provided in DOC. SC40-6 rev.1 (which includes the CHF 59,000 release of the Reserve Fund) and agreed the allocations of the surplus to the Reserve Fund for 2008 as indicated in DOC. SC40-7 rev.1.

Agenda item 8.3: The Secretariat's budget for 2009

Decision SC40-9: The Standing Committee approved the core budget allocations for 2009 as set out in DOC. SC40-2 rev.1, expressed its thanks to those Parties that have made additional voluntary contributions, and noted the current declines in voluntary contributions. The Committee appealed to the members and the Secretariat to redouble their efforts in finding voluntary funding for important activities such as the work of the STRP, the Small Grants Fund, and Ramsar Advisory Missions.

Agenda item 8.4: The Secretariat's services agreement with IUCN

Decision SC40-10: The Standing Committee noted the successful conclusion of the Letter of Agreement on Services with IUCN, reaffirmed the 13% budget ceiling adopted by Resolution X.2 (2008), and charged the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance to work with the Secretary General in support of the negotiations and reach a resolution so that no more than 13% has to be charged to the Ramsar core budget.

Agenda item 8.5: Parties that are consistently in arrears with payments to the Convention

Decision SC40-11: The Standing Committee urged all Parties with unpaid contributions to the core budget to respond to the terms of Resolution X.2 on this matter as a priority,

requested the Secretariat to continue to work with each Party in arrears to resolve this on a case by case basis, and requested the Chair of the Standing Committee do whatever is necessary to support the Secretariat's actions and where necessary to consider contacting Parties in default directly.

Agenda item 8.6: Optimizing the Small Grants Fund

Decision SC40-12: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Senior Regional Advisor for Europe on the current situation of the Small Grants Fund and the process planned for finalizing the 2008 Allocation Report and evaluating 2009 proposals for the Standing Committee's approval.

The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance reported on two additional recommendations to the SC concerning staff salary awards and future engagement with the Global Environment Facility.

Decision SC40-13: The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance to review the overall process and mechanisms for Secretariat staff salary awards, clearly considering the decision-making responsibilities of the Secretary General vs. where Ramsar should follow IUCN processes.

Decision SC40-14: The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance to consider how best the Secretariat and Parties could engage more strongly with the Global Environment Facility so as to enhance the opportunity for GEF to act more directly as a funding instrument for the Ramsar Convention (as presently for the CBD, the UNFCCC, and the UNCCD), especially in relation to *inter alia* its International Waters focal area and including in relation to opportunities for further redevelopment of "Signature Initiatives" in collaboration with the IOPs; to identify Ramsar Parties that are also members of the GEF Council and request them to use their positions to help to accomplish this; and to report on this to the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 9: Regional Initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Convention

Decision SC40-15: The Standing Committee adopted the Evaluation Criteria for Regional Initiatives as found in Annex I of DOC. SC40-10, with the amendments proposed by Brazil, but will keep them under review for consideration by SC41.

Decision SC40-16: The Standing Committee adopted the "Format for annual financial and work plan reporting" for Regional Initiatives as found in Annex II of DOC. SC40-10, with the amendment proposed by Marshall Islands.

Decision SC40-17: The Standing Committee welcomed the model letter of support as found in Annex III of DOC. SC40-10, with the deletion of the last line of para. 3 of the preamble.

Decision SC40-18: The Standing Committee endorsed the following Regional Initiatives as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines and operating within the framework of the Convention in 2009-2012 and agreed that they may be eligible for funding in any year during that period:

Carpathian Wetland Initiative

East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
High Andean Wetland Strategy (EHAA)
Himalayan Wetlands Initiative (on condition that agreement is reached on outstanding points among all countries participating – currently China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – money to be withheld until that time)
La Plata River Basin Initiative
Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
Nile River Basin Initiative (NileWet)
Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)
Ramsar Center for Eastern Asia in the Republic of Korea
Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama
Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
Ramsar Regional Center for Central and Western Asia (RRC-CWA) (following the provision of further information on activities in 2008)

The Committee endorsed the following Initiatives provisionally for one year (with eligibility for support) and urged them to submit full proposals for SC41 and possible full endorsement for the rest of the COP cycle until 2012:

Black Sea Coast Initiative
Caribbean Subregional Strategy
Mangrove Ecosystems in the Americas

The Committee recognized two Initiatives as under development and encouraged them to submit full proposals for SC41:

Pacific Islands
West African Coastal Zone (WacoWet)

Decision SC40-19: Recognizing the importance of the ChadWet and NigerWet Initiatives in the Africa region and bearing in mind their transition period, the Standing Committee encouraged those Initiatives to submit updated information for potential approval at the next SC meeting.

Agenda item 4: Roles and responsibilities of the SC (continued)

Decision SC40-20: The Standing Committee determined 1) to delete para. 7 from DOC. SC40-4 without prejudice to any future interpretations of the Rules on closed sessions that might arise, 2) to request the Secretariat to clarify any ambiguities between Resolution VII.1 and the current Rules of Procedure and suggest improvements to SC41, and 3) to request the Secretariat to make a proposal to SC41 on the roles and status of Permanent Observers and regular Observers at individual meetings. The Committee will then consider whether a Resolution updating Resolution VII.1 should be brought to COP11.

Agenda item 10.4: Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform

The Chair thanked the Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group, on behalf of the Standing Committee, for his informative report and asked to be kept informed of progress. No formal decision was taken.

Agenda item 10.1: Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2015

Decision SC40-21: The Standing Committee requested the Regional Representatives to seek the views of Parties in their regions about the progress and any difficulties of implementing the Strategic Plan and to transmit that information to the Secretariat, and tasked the Secretariat to compile a paper from this information for discussion at the next meeting of the SC.

Agenda item 10.2: Promotion and utilization of the Changwon Declaration

Decision SC40-22: The Standing Committee congratulated all Parties that have already taken steps to promote the Changwon Declaration; urged the Parties and Standing Committee members to consider and report on additional ways of promoting it; thanked the Republic of Korea for its offer of funding the publication of a brochure and requested the Secretariat to collaborate in finding the best way of doing so; and encouraged the SC members to provide inputs to the Korean Ministry of Environment for the upcoming meeting on the Declaration to be held in Changwon in October or November 2009.

Agenda item 10.3: The Secretariat's Work Plan 2009

Decision SC40-23: The Standing Committee approved the Secretariat's proposed Work Plan for 2009, with the Oceania amendments, and requested the Secretariat to circulate a draft Work Plan for 2010 electronically by the end of November 2009 for electronic approval by the Committee by the end of December.

Agenda item 14.1: Report of the STRP Oversight Committee

Decision SC40-24: The Standing Committee noted the report of the STRP Oversight Committee.

Agenda item 14.2: Report of the Chair of the STRP

Decision SC40-25: The Standing Committee

- approved the STRP's draft Work Plan for 2009-2012, subject to the proposed amendments;
- urged Parties to consider making voluntary contributions to the STRP's work and expressed its appreciation to the Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom for their contributions and their pledges to consider providing funding support;
- requested the Chair of the STRP to participate as a member in the work of the Subgroup on COP11;
- urged Mediterranean Parties to collaborate with the European Space Agency's GlobWetland project and signify that promptly to the ESA;
- endorsed the concept of the UNESCO-IHE establishing a Ramsar Chair and requested the Secretary General to send a letter to that effect; and
- expressed its gratitude to the STRP for its active participation and support at Ramsar COP10.

Agenda item 14.3: Progress on ecological indicators of Ramsar effectiveness

Decision SC40-26: The Standing Committee took note of the STRP's progress in developing indicators of effectiveness and encouraged further work.

Agenda item 9: Allocations for Regional Initiatives (continued)

Decision SC40-27: The Standing Committee determined to allocate available Ramsar core budget funds for 2009 to 10 regional initiatives asking for such funds, as follows:

regional initiative	allocation 2009
i) networks	
WacoWet	17,000
High Andean	22,000
Himalayan	25,000
Carpathian	37,500
Black Sea	44,690
Caribbean	25,000
American mangroves	25,000
total for networks	196,190
ii) centers	
CREHO center Panama	23,643
Iran Center	35,000
RAMCEA centre Uganda	76,357
total for centers	135,000
Totals	331,190

Decision SC40-28: The Standing Committee urged all Parties directly concerned in the activities of regional centers for training and capacity building and in regional networks for improved implementation of the Convention to provide such centers and initiatives with their substantial support, political, in kind and financial, where possible, and to the maximum extent possible. Such support is crucial to allow such centers and networks to develop, to establish themselves and to become rapidly self-sustainable, in order to provide lasting, structural and operational support to the Parties in the regions concerned. The Secretariat is requested to advise such centers and networks, to the extent of its capacities, on how best to raise additional funds for their operations. The regional center in Iran should receive particular attention in this context in view of its plans to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Convention in 2011.

Agenda item 11: Review of COP10 National Reports and development of National Report Forms for COP11

Decision SC40-29: The Standing Committee agreed that

- i) the COP11 National Report Form should be structured in line with the Goals and Strategies of the new 2009-2015 Ramsar Strategic Plan adopted at COP10 as Resolution X.1;
- ii) the indicators included in the COP11 NRF should speak to the Key Result Areas established by Resolution X.1 for each Strategy in the Plan;
- iii) an indicator or indicators concerning roll-out and uptake of the Changwon Declaration should be included;

- iv) for continuity, and to permit time-series analysis and report of implementation progress, COP11 NRF indicators should as far as possible be consistent with those in previous NRFs, particularly those of the COP10 NRF;
- v) the advice and experience of the STRP should be sought concerning the utility and any adjustments to, or additional need for, indicators in relation particularly to the Panel's experience in using the COP10 NRF indicators in its analyses of effectiveness indicators; and
- vi) the advice of the CEPA Oversight Panel should likewise be sought concerning indicators for the CEPA Strategy of the Strategic Plan.

and requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft National Report Form along these lines for consideration for adoption by SC41 in 2010, distribution to Parties one year prior to COP11, and compilation by the Parties and submission by six months prior to the COP. The SC indicated that one item should be dedicated to the Changwon Declaration.

Agenda item 12: Review of COP10 and progress on COP11

Decision SC40-30: The Standing Committee endorsed the draft Memorandum of Understanding to be negotiated further between the Secretariat and Romania, the host country.

Agenda item 13: Update on status of Ramsar sites

Decision SC40-31: The Standing Committee welcomed the information provided by Parties at this meeting and requested all Parties concerned to forward updated information promptly to the Secretariat on the current situation at the Ramsar sites mentioned in Resolution X.13 and DOC. SC40-15 paras. 5, 13, and 14, and furthermore instructed the Secretariat to follow up on these matters with the respective Administrative Authorities.

Decision SC40-32: The Committee welcomed the information provided on Montreux Record sites in Algeria, Argentina, and Uruguay and urged all Parties with Montreux Record sites, as listed in DOC. SC40-15 annex I, to take steps as a matter of priority to progress the resolution of the problems at those sites and their removal from the Record, and furthermore requested the Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee to follow up on this matter with the Parties in their regions. The SC requested Parties with ideas on how the Secretariat can best assist and encourage Parties in such activities to make their suggestions known to the Secretariat.

Decision SC40-33: The Standing Committee recalled the Parties' commitments in Resolution VI.13 to update the Ramsar Information Sheets on their Ramsar sites at least every six years, encouraged the Parties listed in DOC. SC40-15 annex II to provide their updated information as soon as possible, most especially for those Ramsar sites for which there may be no information recorded at all, and requested all Parties to continue this practice of updating their site information regularly.

Agenda item 15.1: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

Decision SC40-34: The Standing Committee approved the CEPA Oversight Panel's recommendations concerning its composition, endorsed the Panel's proposed Work Plan,

and took note of the need for the development of an effective network of the Ramsar Regional Centres.

Agenda item 15.2: Review of the utility of World Wetlands Day

Decision SC40-35: The Standing Committee encouraged the Secretariat to prepare an attractive, popular version of the assessment report on World Wetlands Day as soon as possible, taking into account the elements mentioned in DOC. SC40-20 concerning identifying WWD targets, assessing event impacts, providing useful suggestions, and improving reporting by a template. The Committee urged the Parties to report actively to the Secretariat on WWD events in their countries. The SC expressed its gratitude to the Danone Group for having provided financial support for the production of WWD materials for the past eleven years and encouraged the Danone Group to continue doing so.

Agenda item 15.3: Themes for World Wetlands Day 2011 and 2012

Decision SC40-36: The Standing Committee confirmed the suggested theme for World Wetlands Day 2011 as “Wetlands and Forests”; noted the proposed theme for 2012 of “Wetlands and Tourism” or “Wetlands and Ecotourism” and determined to revisit the subject at its 41st meeting; urged the Parties to consider planning some special local, national, and regional celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Convention; requested the Secretariat to prepare a suitable 40th anniversary commemoration in collaboration with the Parties and the International Organization Partners; and noted the concept of holding a World Wetlands Week in Seychelles in 2010 and urged other Parties to consider doing the same.

Agenda item 15.4: Update on business partnership activities

Decision SC40-37: The Standing Committee noted the presentation on the progress of partnerships with the business sector and the conversion of the Ramsar Web site, and it welcomed the activities reported. The Committee emphasized the importance of the principles for partnerships with the private sector in Resolution X.12 and affirmed that whenever the need might arise in concluding a partnership agreement, Resolution X.12 will guide the Committee’s decisions.

Agenda item 16: Date and venue of the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee

Decision SC40-38: The Standing Committee:

- i) requested that the Secretariat prepare and issue generic guidance to all Parties concerning the process, timelines, host country responsibilities, and indicative costs of offering to host a Standing Committee meeting, as the basis for their consideration of making any such offer;
- ii) directed any country making an offer to host an SC meeting to provide clear information on the matters in i) above to the Secretariat and Standing Committee at the time of making the offer;
- iii) thanked the government of Georgia for its offer to host the 41st meeting of the SC in 2010;

- iv) provisionally accepted Georgia's offer, subject to satisfactory provision to the Secretariat and Standing Committee not later than 15 August 2009 of the following information –
- establishment of a Task Force for SC41 preparations and identification of a Coordinator who acts as the main contact point for the Secretariat;
 - venue, suitability (capacity, meeting room and support facilities), and accessibility (including travel and transfer arrangements from international/nearest airport);
 - visa issuing for delegates;
 - suitable and sufficient hotel accommodations (and their costs) at or close to the meeting venue;
 - confirmation of full additional cost coverage (including the preparation, travel, and participation costs of Secretariat staff; full additional costs of Ramsar's professional interpreters; additional travel and nights of accommodation for SC members, as necessary), including venue and venue services, and information as to whether any cost-coverage will also be offered to observer Contracting Parties wishing to participate;
- v) requested the Chair and Vice-Chair of SC, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, and the Secretary General to consider the information provided for above, and on behalf of the SC to confirm or otherwise that it provides the appropriate basis for full acceptance of the hosting offer;
- vi) decided that, if it is not possible to make this confirmation, the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee should be held in Gland, Switzerland; and
- vii) determined that the preferable dates for the meeting will be the week of 26-30 April 2010.

Agenda item 17: Adoption of the report of the meeting

Decision SC40-39: The Standing Committee adopted the report of the first two days of the meeting, as amended, and empowered the Chair to approve the report of the third day on its behalf.