

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

Agenda item 7

Meeting of the Management Working Group:
11 May 2009 (1500-1800 h)

Report & Recommendations

Participants:

Chair and Vice Chair of COP9 Standing Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of COP10 SC, COP9 and COP10 Chairs of Subgroup on Finance, STRP COP9/COP10 Chair, Secretary General (*ex officio*), WWF representing the IOPs and representatives of other interested Contracting Parties: Argentina, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Switzerland, Japan, Marshall Islands, Czech Republic.

Apologies were received from the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee (Paraguay was represented by Paraguay's Geneva mission representative) and from the outgoing Standing Committee Vice-Chair (Bahamas).

1. Chairing of the Management Working Group.

Neither Resolutions IX.24 or X.4 formally identify who should chair meetings of the Management Working Group. On the recommendation of the SG, the meeting recognized the Standing Committee Chair as Chair of the Management Working Group, in line with the practice established for the previous triennium.

2. Briefing on role and responsibilities of Management Working Group

The role and responsibilities are set out in Resolution IX.24 and re-affirmed with minor clarifications by Resolution X.4, which also established a Transition Committee for the Management Working Group.

3. Report of the Management Working Group Transition Committee (Resolution X.4)

The SC Chair reported on the key issues and ten recommendations discussed and developed by the Transition Committee in its first meeting on the morning of Monday 11 May 2009 (Note where these matters are relevant for consideration by other SC sub-groups or SC40 Agenda items, this is indicated in square brackets [...]), and the Management Working Group recommends the following:

1. The Chairs of SC should continue to act as an informal intersessional "Executive Team" to support and advise the Secretary General on matters arising.
2. For 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.

3. In line with DOC SC40-4, request the Secretariat to prepare and circulate a list of 'roles and responsibilities' for the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, to complement those already prepared for the Chair, and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance. [*SC40* plenary Agenda item 4 - Briefing on SC roles and responsibilities]
4. A general principle should be to establish continuity (past Chairs etc) in all Standing Committee subgroups, in particular the Subgroup on Finance and the Sub-group on COP. For 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 for these two groups, a COP decision will be needed to formally introduce these additions, although it would be valuable to initiate this during the current cycle as “*ex officio*” roles, provided there are no additional cost implications.
5. The Subgroup on Finance should review the overall process and mechanisms for Secretariat staff salary awards, including in relation to the responsibilities of the SG and those aspects which should follow IUCN processes. [*Sub-group on Finance*]
6. 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.
7. The Subgroup on Finance should 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 in relation *inter alia* its International Waters focal area, including in relation to opportunities for “Signature Initiatives” further redevelopment in collaboration with the IOPs. [*Subgroup on Finance*; Agenda item 8.6 - Optimising the Ramsar Small Grants Fund]
8. There is a need for Standing Committee to review the process of Strategic Plan adoption and adoption of Resolutions (cf Resolution VIII.45) without the full resource capacity for implementation, and consider developing advice to Parties in action planning for implementation of COP outcomes within their capacities. [*SC40* plenary Agenda item 12 - Review of COP10 & preparations for COP11]
9. Concerning this year’s climate negotiations and UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen, the Standing Committee could consider requesting the Secretariat to develop advice, including any specific proposals for Parties on ensuring recognition of the role and significance of different wetlands in the climate negotiations, and where within the negotiations this should be considered – so as to facilitate Ramsar NFPs engaging with their national climate change counterparts. The Standing Committee could request the STRP and its Thematic Work Area lead on wetlands and climate change to prepare a short briefing note on wetlands and climate issues. [*SC40* plenary Agenda item 10.3 Secretariat 2009 Work Plan]
10. Relationships with the IOPs need to be reviewed and further strategically strengthened, including in relation to in-country implementation support activities.

4. Secretariat Partnership Officer (Resolution X.2) (DOC. SC40-3)

Following introduction by the Secretary General of the establishment under Resolution X.2 of a “Partnership Officer” post in the Secretariat, including the need to develop a clear strategy to develop and focus the role and priorities in relation to the level of funds available for 2009 and 2010 for this work in the core budget, and Secretariat proposals to initiate this through establishing a consultancy contract during 2009 to provide the necessary review and advice, the Management Working Group considered the most appropriate way forwards, and made the following recommendations:

Recommendation

The Management Working Group recommends that:

- i) The Secretariat is requested to first 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 fund-raising for major initiative implementation through e.g. IOPs to support national capacity for wetlands conservation and wise use;
- ii) Following this step the Secretariat should 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 ToR for the Partnership Officer post;
- iii) Elaborated draft ToR for the post, in the light of i) and ii) above should be developed in relation to the general terms in Resolution X.2 Annex III, to be reviewed by the SC Chair and a small number of interested SC members and Parties (to be identified); and
- iv) Under this scenario, funds allocated in the 2009 core budget for the partnership development would need to be carried over to the 2010 budget so as 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.

5. Venue of 41st meeting of the Standing Committee

Although it was not possible in the lead-time available to be able to put in place preparatory arrangements to take up Georgia’s COP10 offer to host SC40, Georgia has now reconfirmed its offer to host SC41 in 2010. Argentina on behalf of Latin America and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) has sent a letter to the Standing Committee urging that all meetings of the Standing Committee should be held in Gland, Switzerland, so as in particular to facilitate as full participation as possible by Contracting Parties as observers through the nearby location of their permanent missions in Geneva, and taking into account that funding for SC attendance is available only to developing country appointed members of the Standing Committee, the Management Working Group considered the pros and cons of each location option for Standing Committee meetings, and recommends the following:

Recommendation

Recognizing the issues raised by Argentina on behalf of GRULAC concerning the significant benefits of SC meetings being held in Gland (notably the ability through Geneva missions to participate as observers without additional cost), and also recognizing the benefits recognized during COP10 of some meetings being hosted by other Parties and the COP10 Report decision to urge Parties to consider such hosting, the Management Working Group recommends that:

- i) 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) For any country making an offer to host, a Standing Committee clear information on the matters in i) above should be provided to the Secretariat and Standing Committee at the time of making the offer;
- ii) Concerning the offer by Georgia to host SC41, the Management Working Group recommends that the Standing Committee:
 - a) thanks the government of Georgia for its offer;
 - b) provisionally accepts the offer, subject to satisfactory provision to the Secretariat and Standing Committee not later than 15 August 2009 of the following information (in line with the information already provided by the Secretariat to Georgia on the tasks and obligations in relation to its hosting offer for SC40), including *inter alia*:
 - establishment of a Task Force for SC41 preparations and identification of a Coordinator who acts as the main contact point for the Secretariat;
 - venue and 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 accommodation (and its costs) at or close to meeting venue;
 - confirmation of full additional cost coverage (including Secretariat staff preparation, and travel and participation costs; full additional costs of Ramsar's professional interpreters; additional travel and nights of accommodation for SC members, is necessary), including venue and venue services, and information as to whether cost-coverage will also be offered to observer Contracting Parties wishing to participate.
 - c) requests the Chair and Vice-Chair of SC and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and the Secretary General to consider the information provided under subpara b) above, and on behalf of the SC to confirm or otherwise that it provides the appropriate basis for full acceptance of the hosting offer; and
 - d) if it is not possible to make this confirmation, that the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee should be held in Gland, Switzerland.

6. Any other business

The Management Working Group considered whether it could or should take a role in reviewing proposals for regional initiatives, and concluded that this was currently outside its remit as set out in Resolution X.4 and that such matters should continue to be addressed through the Sub-group on Finance and the Standing Committee in plenary.