

Agenda item 16

## Adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to a) advise on further considerations of options for Switzerland's status on the Standing Committee and b) consider the attached Draft Resolution concerning amending the Netherland's Standing Committee status.

1. After discussions at the 41<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (SC41), the Standing Committee in Decision SC41-5 concluded that "it is inappropriate for the Netherlands and other host countries of IOPs to have the status of Permanent Observer [to the Standing Committee]".
2. The Committee will recall that the present Permanent Observer status of the Netherlands arose as a historical consequence of being the host country of the organization that provided technical secretariat services to the Convention – formerly IWRB and presently called Wetlands International. This was originally the United Kingdom, but when Wetlands International moved its headquarters to the Netherlands in the mid-1990s, that country assumed *de facto* Permanent Observer status (for further explanation see DOC. SC40-18).
3. To change this status requires that the Conference of the Contracting Parties take a decision to amend the terms of Resolution VII.1, paragraph 11.
4. The Standing Committee may therefore wish to consider the attached short Draft Resolution and transmitting it as amended on this matter to the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11).
5. SC41 also discussed possible options concerning the status of Switzerland as a Permanent Observer to the Standing Committee as a result of its being the host country of the Secretariat, but this matter remains unresolved as the Secretariat does not have funds for the legal advice requested by Decision SC41-5. The Standing Committee may wish to consider and advise how to progress this matter.

## **COP11 Draft Resolution**

### **Explanatory note from the Secretariat**

Following consideration by the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> meetings of the Standing Committee of the roles and responsibilities of the Committee, the Committee considered in Decision SC41-5 that the status of the Netherlands as a Permanent Observer to the Standing Committee was a historical legacy of former operational arrangements for Convention technical secretariat functions (provided by IWRB and subsequently Wetlands International) and is now anachronistic under the present operations of the Convention. The Committee and decided in Decision SC41-5 that “it is inappropriate for the Netherlands and other host countries of IOPs to have the status of Permanent Observer [to the Standing Committee]”.

To change this status of the Netherlands requires that the Conference of the Contracting Parties take a decision to amend the terms of Resolution VII.1. A short draft COP11 Resolution to address this matter has been prepared and submitted by the Standing Committee (Decision SC42-xx).

### **Ramsar COP11 DR-xx**

#### **Adjustments to the terms of Resolution VII.1 on “Regional Categorization of countries under the Convention, and composition, roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, including tasks of Standing Committee members”**

1. AWARE of Decision SC41-5 of the 41<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee which determined that “it is inappropriate for the Netherlands and other host countries of IOPs to have the status of Permanent Observer [to the Standing Committee]”.

#### **THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES**

2. AMENDS the text of paragraph 11 of Resolution VII.1 to read: “DECIDES that the Contracting Party which hosts the Secretariat of the Convention shall continue to have the status of Permanent Observer in the Standing Committee;”
3. INSTRUCES the Ramsar Secretariat to make this amendment to the text of Resolution VII.1 and to update the wording of “Ramsar Bureau” to “Ramsar Secretariat” throughout the text of Resolution VII.1, and to reissue the updated text to all Parties; and
4. CONFIRMS that this updated text supersedes that adopted as Resolution VII.1.