

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
44th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Bucharest, Romania, 4 July 2012

Report of the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC44)

SC members present: Cameroon, China, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Jamaica, Lebanon, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Romania, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania

Permanent Observers present: Netherlands, Switzerland; IUCN, IWMI, Wetlands International, WWF International

Observer Parties present: Argentina, Australia, Bhutan, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, France, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Africa, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States of America

Additional observers: UNEP, Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia

1. **Mr Yeon-Chul Yoo (Republic of Korea), Chair of the Standing Committee,** welcomed the participants and invited the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) to introduce the agenda for the meeting.
2. **The DSG** explained three new items that he felt should be added to the published agenda: the timetable for recruitment of a successor to Secretary General Tiéga when his term ends; the intersessional decision of the Standing Committee (SC) on Regional Initiatives; and updated information on the IPBES process. The agenda thus amended was adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 1: Welcoming remarks

3. **The SC Chair** welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude both to the Romanian hosts for their preparations in this beautiful building and to the Secretariat staff for their preparation of the logistics and documentation. He reported briefly on the April plenary for IPBES in Panama, noting that Bonn has been chosen as the site of the future secretariat. He also reported on the results of the Rio+20 summit in Brazil, noting that consensus had been reached on the Green Economy and, in general terms, on upgrading UNEP. He said that how to upgrade UNEP will be the next challenge. These developments have ramifications for the Ramsar Convention and its efforts to work with the global MEAs.
4. **The SC Chair** pointed to the need for a paradigm shift for all of the environmental community and for the Ramsar Convention in particular; in light of that, he noted the importance of a spirit of cooperation, and he urged the participants to expend all of their cooperative efforts to achieve significant tangible results at this meeting of the COP.
5. **State Secretary Mr. Cozmanciuc** expressed his honor in welcoming the participants to Romania and his hope that the COP will make great progress in developing a strategic vision for the Convention's next 40 years. He explained that Romania offered to host the COP back in 2008, and agreement was reached on the modalities in 2010. He felt that everyone could appreciate that the organization of such an event, over time and among

many governmental departments, can be a complicated procedure, especially in light of changes in government procedures, but he expressed his sense of a strong obligation for Romania to honor its commitments for such an important international meeting. He said that there is a meeting of government departments coming up soon, and he was confident that everything would be approved at that time. He said that his position as National Coordinator for the COP preparations has given him a unique view of its importance.

6. **Mr Cozmanciuc** introduced State Secretary Mr Mihail Fâca, who has been nominated as the Alternate President of the COP. **Mr Fâca** expressed his honor at being able to contribute in this way and he hoped to be able to ensure the best climate for the discussions. He is president of the National Environmental Protection Agency of Romania and, as such, he feels that the Ramsar Convention is very important for Romania, especially for its wetlands.
7. **The Chair of the SC** thanked the Romanian speakers for their welcome and their enthusiasm.

Agenda item 2: Report on the arrangements for COP11

8. **The Secretary General (SG)** welcomed everyone and thanked all for their contributions to the preparations for the COP. He thanked Romania for hosting COP11 and their hard work on the logistics of the meeting, and he recognized the work of Ms Sandra Hails, the Secretariat's CEPA Programme Officer, who has served and is still serving as the Secretariat's logistics coordinator for the COP, as she has done for past COPs as well.
9. **Sandra Hails** spoke briefly about the many aspects of COP preparations that have been completed well and those that are being completed at this time, and she expressed confidence that the preparations will continue to a successful conclusion. She drew attention to two challenges to be kept in mind for the future. 1) Despite the efforts of the Romanian colleagues and the Secretariat, it was impossible to arrange for visas on arrival, and not enough Parties have Romanian embassies to facilitate visas from their home countries. In addition, quite a few Parties did not pre-register early enough to overcome those obstacles. 2) Our Romanian colleagues had difficulties in getting an Event Management Company (EMC) up and running until a very late date, so a lot is happening at the last moment. That said, the Ministry staff has been a joy to work with, and the Secretariat and that department have been a united team. Similarly, the EMC has been an incredible can-do team and has performed a remarkable feat in a short time. She foresaw that all will go smoothly for the COP.
10. **The DSG** added that, given the difficulties of running a COP with only the Secretariat's small staff, a few extra hands have been recruited to help. He introduced Dave Pritchard, who will be assisting the DSG in a number of areas, and Mr Veit Koester, who is well known to many in the Ramsar family and who will be on hand to advise the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties on any legal matters that may arise. A number of members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) are also present to advise Parties on any matters of scientific or technical interest.
11. **The DSG** explained that all of the proposed Draft Resolutions (DRs) were released by 5 April as required, and there are only 21 of them for this COP (unless the Conference Committee should wish to add another), a significant reduction from recent COPs. There

are presently 37 Information Papers, and most were posted on the website by the 5th of June, though a few more have become available since then. On the Ramsar website, there is a button at the bottom of the DR and DOC pages in English, French, and Spanish for downloading all documents posted before 3 July in one ZIP file.

12. **The DSG** noted that, as instructed by SC43, DR4 on the status of Ramsar Sites has been issued as a Rev. 1 to include all of the most recent information on Ramsar Sites submitted to the Secretariat by mid-June. In order to minimize the time spent in COP plenary sessions on updates about specific sites, all Parties are requested to submit any additional site information to the Secretariat at intervention@ramsar.org, and it is proposed that a DR4 Rev. 2 will be issued before the Resolution comes up for consideration in the plenary to include this latest information. He invited all who can do so to submit their proposed texts for amendments or inclusion, and for any plenary interventions requiring to be recorded verbatim, by e-mail to that address, but if necessary Parties can still do so by passing clearly-written texts on paper to Secretariat staff in the plenary hall.

Agenda item 3: General review of the COP11 Provisional Agenda

13. **The DSG** explained that since the first version of the Provisional Agenda was posted, arrangements have been made for the five Special Presentations that will be offered during plenary sessions: 1) on Romanian wetlands, 2) on the relevance of Rio+20 for Ramsar, 3) on sustainable tourism and wetlands, 4) on the TEEB report for Ramsar on the economics of water and wetlands, and 5) on water security and wetlands as natural infrastructure.
14. **The Chair of the SC** noted that there has been no objection to the Oceania region's request for shift the Conference Committee's meeting times from 8:45 to 8:30 each morning, and so that will be done, subject to the Conference Committee's wishes once it has been established. **The DSG** proposed to issue a Rev. 1 of the Provisional Agenda to reflect both of those updates.

Decision SC44-1: The Standing Committee determined to forward for the COP's consideration a revised text of the Provisional Agenda (DOC. 1) including the agreed amendments.

Agenda item 4: COP11 Rules of Procedures

15. **The DSG** noted that the Secretariat has had talks with Mr Koester, the legal advisor, about several matters concerning the Rules of Procedure. He said that it is uncommon for the Rules of Procedure to have to be adopted at the opening of each meeting of the COP, instead of only when amended, but that requirement is stipulated in the Regina Amendments to the Convention and would be difficult to change.
16. Concerning the proposed amendment to Rule 26 about open meetings of the Conference Committee, **the DSG** explained that the legal advisor felt that that might cause problems unnecessarily, since that Committee deals only with procedural and not with substantive matters and its daily discussions must be narrowly focused. The advisor accordingly recommended that the proposed amendment should not be brought forward.
17. **The USA** expressed appreciation that a number of concerns about Rule 18 have been addressed, but felt that the amendment on open meetings for Rule 26 should be

maintained, though a provision should be made in case the Committee's meetings might have to be closed to non-Contracting Parties. The USA proposed adding the phrase "unless any member of the Standing Committee objects" to the proposed amendment. **Cameroon** supported that proposal.

18. **The DSG** said that he thought that another Rule also deals with closed meetings and suggested that, in the next triennium, it might be appropriate to review all of the Rules of Procedure with a view to simplifying and harmonizing them. He said that a revised version of the Rules of Procedure will be posted on the website, with the USA's amendment, as DOC. 2 Rev. 1.
19. **South Africa** maintained that the amendment to Rule 18.3 stipulating "not later than 24 hours" might leave too little time for rectify shortcomings in any credentials and urged adding "if possible". **The DSG** recalled that there was a lot of discussion at SC43 about the COP10 Credential Committee's recommendations for addressing the difficulties it faced, and he felt that "if possible" could be open-ended, whereas we must have the conclusions of the Credential Committee before any matters are considered that might require a vote. He noted that, according to Rule 18.1, exceptional cases can be resolved at the discretion of the Committee.
20. **Cameroon** reported that for some Parties, other officials can be empowered to sign official documents in the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and such variations within the legal protocols of various Parties must be taken into account. **The DSG** noted that another Rule specifies that such credentials can be accepted if accompanied by a letter explaining that that person is legally authorized to sign.
21. **South Africa** inquired about the powers of the Credential Committee and the route for a Party to appeal against its decision if necessary. **The DSG** noted that the Credentials Committee does its utmost to resolve problems to help all Parties to have valid credentials, but that in any case the Committee does not decide anything – it merely presents its report with its recommendations to the COP in plenary session, and it is for the COP to adopt that report in whole or in part. Any Party may appeal the Committee's recommendation by explaining its situation to the COP at that time and asking the COP to decide differently. He reiterated that it is important for the Committee to make its report fairly early in the COP, in case a vote should be needed at any time.
22. **Denmark** felt that limiting the time to resolve issues might increase the possibility of conflicts. **Nigeria** agreed that the Committee's discretion should be sufficient to permit resolution of issues. **The Chair of the SC** emphasized the desirability of flexibility.
23. **Jamaica** suggested changing 24 hours to 48 but argued that all sorts of problems might arise if the phrase "if possible" were present. He also suggested shortening Rule 18.3 by referring to 18.1, and **the USA** supported that. Amended wording to the proposed Rules was agreed to reflect that.
24. **South Africa** urged that it would be preferable to have a compromise text providing for 48 hours and explaining the possibilities for appeal. **Cameroon** felt that Rule 19 makes it quite clear that any Party can appeal a Committee recommendation in plenary, and that that is fully in the spirit of what South Africa wishes. **The DSG** noted the legal advisor's

comment that Rule 20 also makes it clear that it is only the plenary COP that finally decides the status of the Parties' credentials.

Decision SC44-2: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a Rev. 1 of DOC. 2 on amendments to the Rules of Procedure, incorporating the amendments proposed for Rules 18 and 26 by the USA and Jamaica.

Agenda item 5: Nomination of the COP11 President and Vice-Presidents

25. **The DSG** explained the Convention's customary arrangements for a COP President and an Alternate to serve in his or her absence, and for two Vice-Presidents from other regions to fill in as required.
26. He reported that Romania has suggested that the Standing Committee should nominate to the COP, for President, Ms Rovana Plumb, Minister of Environment and Forests, and for Alternate President, Mr Mihail Fâca, State Secretary and President of the National Agency for Environmental Protection.
27. **The DSG** reported that, as in the customary procedure for taking account of geographical distribution and Parties that have been nominated to the Vice-Presidency in the past (DOC. SC44-04), the Secretariat is proposing that the regional Vice-Presidents for this COP should be from Asia and the Neotropics, and that the SC's nomination for the Asia region should be Mohamed Saif Abdulrahman Alafkham Hammoudi (UAE). The Secretariat is not yet in a position to nominate a representative of the Neotropics region.

Decision SC44-3: The Standing Committee agreed to nominate for the COP's consideration, for President of the COP, Ms Rovana Plumb, Minister of Environment and Forests of Romania; for Alternate President, Mr Mihail Fâca, State Secretary and President of the National Agency for Environmental Protection; and for one of the two Vice-Presidents, Mr Mohamed Saif Abdulrahman Alafkham Hammoudi (UAE), from the Asia region.

Agenda item 6: Appointment of the Credentials Committee

28. **The DSG** summarized the make-up and responsibilities of the COP Credentials Committee and looked to each of the regional groups to nominate a representative for the COP's consideration. He noted that the Secretariat has appointed Ms Claudia Fenerol, the Partnership Coordinator, to serve as secretary for the Committee, with support from Mr Dave Pritchard, who performed a similar role at COP10. He noted that the Credentials Committee is scheduled to begin its work on 7 July and should prepare its report by no later than 6 p.m. on 10 July, so that it can be finalized by the Secretariat on 11 July for presentation to the participants.

Agenda item 7: Establishment of COP11 Committees: 7.1 COP Committee on Finance and Budget

29. **The DSG** explained that the COP can create any COP committees it wishes to, but that, given the press of time and shortage of rooms, we should seek to keep them to a minimum. It is customary to have a COP Committee on Finance and Budget, which is traditionally composed of the SC's Subgroup on Finance with an additional representative

from each of the regions. The SG and Finance Officer participate *ex officio*, and the meetings are normally open unless they need to be closed. The regional groups should determine their nominations for those additional members.

30. **Denmark** requested that since Finland, as Chair of that Committee, must remain impartial on the issues, Europe might be permitted to have a second additional regional delegate.
31. **The USA** expressed concern that, though the Committee is technically open to all, if members are specified some Parties may seem to have more standing than others. **The SG** felt that it is important that all Parties who wish to engage and make their views known are able to do so. He noted, however, that whereas all Parties may engage if they wish to, some Parties must take responsibility for achieving the required results in any case. That core group of members, as traditionally composed, must agree the recommendations finally to be made to the plenary, but in principle it is most important to reach a consensus on all matters so that all Parties may take ownership of the results.
32. **South Africa** was pleased to learn that the COP Committee has never gone into closed sessions. **The DSG** clarified that it does have the power to do so if necessary, if for example the debates should become dominated by NGOs and the press of time requires the Parties to narrow their focus in order to achieve their results in good time. As in all committees, it is up to the members of the committee and its chair to determine if that should ever be necessary.
33. **The Chair of the SC** agreed that wide participation in that COP Committee is vital on such a key issue as the budget.
34. **Finland, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance**, thanked the participants for their comments and welcomed the engagement of as many Parties as may wish to participate. **The DSG** reminded that the regional meetings need to determine their nominations for Committee membership, and said that 7 July has been proposed for the beginning of the Committee's work.

Decision SC44-4: The Standing Committee determined to recommend to the COP that a COP Committee on Finance and Budget should be created and that it should be composed of the present Subgroup on Finance, one additional member from each Ramsar region, and a second additional member from the European region in light of Finland's chairmanship.

Agenda item 7.2: Committee on COP11 DR1

35. **The DSG** explained that the Secretariat had proposed establishing a COP Committee on the hosting arrangements of the Secretariat, but that upon the advice of the legal advisor it is no longer felt that that would be a profitable exercise. Given the complexities of the issues, and given the fact that the Parties have been studying all aspects of the issues for quite a few years and now have an exhaustive summary of those debates before them in COP11 DOC. 17, the advisor urges that there is nothing more to be debated and that, in order to proceed expeditiously to a conclusion of this matter, whatever that might be, at this COP, the COP should best approach the question as follows:

36. Subject to the COP's agreement, the President should call upon the Parties in the plenary to signify in an informal expression of opinion whether they prefer Alternative 1 (IUCN) or Alternative 2 (UNEP) or abstain. No rationales or further persuasions will be permitted at that stage, since everything has already been said many times and all Parties now wish to move successfully to a conclusion at this meeting. Depending upon the results of this informal "straw vote" and its indications of whether there is sufficient support for any option to warrant proceeding, the President will consult and propose the most efficient way forward.
37. **The Chair of the SC** recalled that SC43 agreed to await the outcomes of Rio+20 and the next meeting of the UN General Assembly. **The DSG** noted that Mr Brice Lalonde will speak to the plenary on 8 July about the implications of the Rio+20 outcomes for the Ramsar Convention.
38. **Switzerland** inquired whether, if the COP should decide to create a Committee to pursue this issue, it would be open to all Parties. **The DSG** surmised that, if after consideration of the state of opinions, such a Committee should be thought necessary, it would be open unless the chair or members felt that it should be closed. **Mexico** urged that one Party from each region should be nominated for such a Committee.
39. **Cameroon** stressed the importance of allowing all Parties to express themselves freely and felt that if the solicitation of opinions should begin with DR1 Alternative 2 as suggested, it might lead people to stress the negative. He urged that it would be important to see which option Parties believe would give the Convention the most visibility.
40. **The USA** suggested that instead of soliciting informal opinions on one of the alternative DRs first and then the other, the Parties should be asked to indicate their preference for either Alternative 1 or Alternative 2, or abstain. This was generally agreed.
41. **Uganda** agreed that it is an important matter for the Convention and felt that it should be open for discussion by all. At some point, we need a consensus on this matter at this COP, so he supported having a committee that could make progress towards such a consensus.
42. **The DSG** noted that we are all agreed that we want a level-playing field for all Parties to have a say first, and then we can renew discussions if necessary. He urged that the Secretariat's proposals in DOC. SC44-04 should be ignored in light of the legal advisor's proposal.
43. **Cameroon** stressed that in the event of a committee or contact group being set up, the COP would need to be clear about its definition in terms of its legal standing. **The DSG** agreed that we must be completely clear about that, whether it is formal or informal, broadly or specifically focused, etc. The plenary will address those questions.
44. **The Chair of the SC** summarized the discussions for the decision.

Decision SC44-5: The Standing Committee decided not to establish a COP Committee on DR1 and determined to leave any such decision to the President and Parties in the plenary session. If the President needs to establish such a committee, it must be done with its precise mandate provided very clearly.

Admission of Observers

45. **Uganda** pointed out that the agenda has not included an item for Admission of Observers. **The DSG** indicated that he thought that only the representative of UNEP would need to be admitted. The representative of UNEP was welcomed to the meeting by consensus.

Agenda item 8: Establishment of contract groups

46. **The DSG** summarized the mechanism for setting up contact groups to advance consensus if the President should feel they are needed, and he noted that the Secretariat will try to assign a senior staff member to act as secretary for any groups thus established. STRP members will also be available to advise on any groups or informal discussions that have scientific or technical elements. All contact groups must strive to complete their work by 1 p.m. on Wednesday, 11 July, to give the Secretariat time to re-issue their results in the three languages by the 12th.
47. **The Chair of the SC** urged that no more than two contact groups should be meeting simultaneously, in consideration of smaller delegations.
48. **Denmark** indicated that some European members would like to have a contact group on IPBES in order to discuss that matter there rather than in the plenary. (See also paras. 63 and 64 below.)

Agenda item 9: Issues arising from previous COP Resolutions

49. **The DSG** indicated that the Secretariat has not identified any outstanding issues that have not been covered by the DRs or Information Papers.
50. **Cameroon** recalled that at COP10 the possibility of having a high-level ministerial segment was discussed and not resolved. **The SG** noted that this was discussed at SC43 and it was resolved that Romania would be asked about hosting it, and subsequently Romania has stated clearly that it is not in a position to host such a ministerial segment at COP11.
51. As to the future, **the DSG** noted that SC43 decided not to bring forward a COP11 Draft Resolution on this issue, and that because of that decision it could not be treated as an “emerging issue” needing a COP11 decision under the Rules of Procedure, but it could very well be an issue that the new Standing Committee could take up in anticipation of COP12.
52. **Cameroon** felt that the issue is not to learn whether the host country wishes to hold one, but rather whether all Ramsar COPs should have a high-level segment to make substantial decisions. A number of Contracting Parties wish to discuss this issue, and it is not sufficient to avoid that by saying that the COP host country does not want to organize one.

Agenda item 10: Consideration of the Draft Resolution 4 on “status of Ramsar Sites”

53. Noting that Article 8.2 of the Convention requires the Secretary General to report to each meeting of the COP on the status of the sites in the Ramsar List, **the SG** described the process by which the Secretariat has carried out the Standing Committee's SC43 decisions. In accordance with that process, he invited the Parties to review the DR4 Rev.1 document and provide any further information to the Secretariat so that a DR4 Rev.2 can be prepared in three languages in time for the COP's consideration and adoption of the Resolution. He said that there is no occasion for amending the Information Paper DOC. 8 upon which the DR is based, because the revised DR will contain the most up-to-date information possible. He said that Parties should be welcome, under that COP agenda item, to make general interventions but that matters of detail, and specifically updates to the text of DR4 Rev.1, should be submitted to the Secretariat preferably via intervention@ramsar.org or on paper.
54. **The DSG** added that it might be necessary for the COP to consider DR4 Rev.2 later than in numerical order to allow more time for the Secretariat to incorporate new information and have translations made.

Agenda item 11: COP Opening Ceremony and social functions

55. **The SG** reported that the Opening Ceremony will begin at 5 p.m. on 6 July and last for approximately two hours. He outlined the programme, as presently configured, of cultural events, messages and statements, and the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards ceremony.

Agenda item 12: Conference Committee

56. **The DSG** described the usual operations of the Conference Committee, which will operate under the COP10 Rules of Procedure until the COP11 Rules have been adopted. The Committee can set its own schedule but normally meets daily for about an hour prior to the first plenary; it is usually not necessary to meet on the field trips/documents day.
57. **The SC Chair** noted that the committee is composed of the SC members plus the President and Vice Presidents of the COP. **The USA** understood that under the current Rules the Committee will be closed for its first meeting but open thereafter if the new Rules are adopted.

Agenda item 12 bis: The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

58. **The DSG** summarized the IPBES process to date and described the recent Information Paper (DOC. 36) on that subject. He felt that it was an opportunity for the Ramsar Convention to be one of the first MEAs to input its views into that process. He recalled that SC43 wished to await the outcomes of the Panama plenary in April before deciding whether to consider adopting a standalone Resolution on engagement with IPBES, noting that there are mentions of IPBES in both the preambular and operative parts of DR6 on synergies with other institutions. He said that, in light of SC43's consideration of the issue, under the Rules of Procedure a standalone DR could be brought forward by the Conference Committee as an emerging issue, as was done at COP9 on highly pathogenic avian influenza.

59. **The STRP Chair** added that there some relevant issues outlined in DOC. 36 that could be useful in crafting a new DR. She indicated that in the Chair of Subsidiary Advisory Bodies (CSAB) discussions in March it was felt that each of the MEAs should send a strong message on engaging with IPBES and seize the opportunity to shape IPBES process as it develops.
60. **The SC Chair** attended the Panama plenary and noted that the IPBES was set up as an independent intergovernmental body, with the question of whether to become a body of the United Nations to be left for later discussions. He took the opportunity to congratulate Germany for being chosen to host the IPBES secretariat. He urged the Ramsar family to take advantage of the opportunity to engage with the IPBES process.
61. **The USA** expressed strong support for IPBES but voiced serious concerns about the suggestion that a new Draft Resolution can be brought forward at this late date. She felt that the situation does not meet the test of being an “emerging issue”. DOC. 36 was only issued on Monday, with little time for the Parties to reflect upon it. The USA noted that there are certainly ways within existing DRs to strengthen a message about engagement with IPBES, but the suggested items in DOC. 36 do not seem either new or urgent. She felt that just having a standalone Resolution does not make an issue more important than addressing the same issues in other ways would do. She is supportive of most or all of the items mentioned, but not of the need for an emergency Resolution. The USA is keen to protect the stringency of the Rules of Procedure; the Parties need time to consider fully issues that are not emergencies, as the avian flu situation certainly was. The USA offered to help to find other places in the DRs where these issues might be introduced.
62. **The Chair of the SC** shared the view that it is not important how many Resolutions we have, but rather it is their content that it is important.
63. **Denmark** felt that what is most important is that we have a challenge that we have to deal with. Europe prefers a standalone Resolution to stress the importance of taking action before the next COP, because that indicates our level of seriousness. He felt that it would be easier to deal with the relevant issues in one place rather than having them spread about.
64. **The STRP Chair** suggested that we can continue to discuss whether to have the issues covered in one place or distributed, but she sought guidance in drafting such text, so that we can then decide whether it works better as a standalone or distributed.
65. **The DSG** suggested that the SC could request that a drafting group meet and see how the two paragraphs in DR6 would look with the new items added, and the Conference Committee could then decide whether to bring forward the amended DR6, create a new DR if that would be too unbalanced, or split DR6 into two related DRs. He suggested that the USA, Denmark, the STRP Chair, and Dave Pritchard for the Secretariat could participate in that drafting group, and he promised to e-mail some additional more recent suggestions that have been received from others, including from IPBES.
66. **The USA** indicated willingness to participate in that group.

Decision SC44-6: The Standing Committee agreed to invite a drafting group comprising the USA, Denmark, the STRP Chair, and Dave Pritchard, and any

other interested Parties, to develop suitable text on Ramsar's engagement with the IPBES process and make a recommendation to the Conference Committee.

Agenda item 13: Agenda for the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee

67. **The DSG** recalled SC43's decision to bring forward the election of the new Standing Committee and invite its members to join the COP11 Conference Committee. That allows the new SC to meet on 10 July to choose its officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Subgroup on Finance). He suggested that the present SC44 meeting should provide advice to SC45 on a proposed agenda and on the Secretary General's recruitment process.

Decision SC44-7: The Standing Committee agreed to recommend the SC45 draft agenda found in DOC. SC44-04 and urged the regional meetings to continue their considerations of regional nominations for the new SC.

68. **The USA** noted that DOC. SC44-03 on the recruitment of the next SG contains no reference to the Transition Committee. She had understood that the timeline for recruitment had already been decided but felt that a conversation on the matter could be valuable. It should, however, be restricted to Contracting Parties.
69. **The DSG** suggested that the Transition Committee, comprising what is now called the "Executive Team" (the SC Chair and Vice Chair and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance) of both the present and the incoming Standing Committees should work together on the issue of the SG recruitment and other issues as appropriate. As to the timeline, he recalled that the Secretariat had suggested a timeline but no decision was taken, so the SC might now wish to consider both suggestions.

Decision SC44-8: The Standing Committee urged the Chair and Vice Chair and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance of both the present and incoming Standing Committees to work together as the Transition Committee with reference to the recruitment of the next Secretary General and other matters.

Agenda item 14: Any other business

The SC's intersessional decision on Regional Initiatives

70. **The SG** recalled that, in pursuance of SC43's instructions, in April the Secretariat circulated information and a proposed decision on allocations for Regional Initiatives, and by that process the Committee made its decision by electronic means. In order to record that decision for easy reference in the future, he invited the SC to note that decision now.
71. **The SG** also reported that the Secretariat has been able to disburse all of the funding for Regional Initiatives that were allocated for 2011 in addition to the 2012 allocation.

Decision SC44-9: The Standing Committee noted its intersessional decision concerning Regional Initiatives, which was taken electronically and notified as of 20 May 2012, that

The Standing Committee agreed to:

- a) withdraw endorsement of the Nile River Basin Initiative as a Regional Initiative operating under the Convention in 2009-2012,
- b) require reports from all operating initiatives on progress in 2012 and work plans for 2013, including summary financial reports of income and expenditures, to be submitted to the Secretariat by 28 February 2013 in time for the Committee's 46th meeting,
- c) allocate 2012 core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for their operations in 2012 as follows:

Regional centres for:

East Africa (in Kampala)	25,000 CHF
Western Hemisphere (in Panama City)	16,000 CHF

Regional networks for:

West African Coast and Niger river basin	20,000 CHF
High Andean wetlands	10,000 CHF
La Plata river basin	14,000 CHF
Caribbean wetlands	15,000 CHF
American mangroves and reefs	20,000 CHF
Carpathian wetlands	16,560 CHF
Black and Azov Sea coastal wetlands	3,179 CHF

Total	139,739 CHF
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Note: These allocations are in addition to the allocations deferred from 2011 to 2012 via Decision SC43-17.

72. **The Islamic Republic of Iran** recalled that the Standing Committee has also discussed how to support Regional Initiatives on a project basis.

The process for recruitment of the next Secretary General

73. **The DSG** noted that the USA has requested a closed session for this item of the agenda and inquired whether it should be confined just to SC members or to all Contracting Parties present. The **USA, Jamaica, and Finland** supported the latter option.
74. The Standing Committee went into a closed session restricted to Contracting Party delegates. The following Standing Committee decision was subsequently reported.

Decision SC44-10: The Standing Committee agreed that it will seek to expedite the process of hiring the new Secretary General by shortening the timeline for the hiring process and starting date of the new SG and to begin at the 45th meeting of the Committee. Every effort should be made for this to be accomplished prior to the expiration of the present Secretary General's contract.

A period of up to two weeks maximum in overlap between the current and future SGs is preferable for continuity in the Secretariat. To that end, should the hiring of the new SG not be completed prior to the expiration of the present SG's contract, the contract of the latter may be extended to maintain continuity.

The conditions for facilitating the overlap will be worked out by the new Standing Committee through the leadership of the new SC Chair.

Timeline:

- SC45 Process begins** Allow 2 months for the Standing Committee and the Secretariat to list and consider the selection criteria, write the vacancy announcement, terms of reference, etc., and organize the procedure.
- 3rd-4th week September 2012** Allow 2 weeks for dissemination of vacancy announcement (Web, e-mail lists, possible advertisements or possible headhunting company).
- October - November 2012** Allow 2 months for application period – suggested deadline for online applications of 30 November 2012.
- December 2012- January 2013** Allow at least 6 weeks for the shortlisting process. Consider who should carry out this task
- February 2013** Calls for interview of short-listed candidates, organization of interview process, collection of references.
- 2nd week of March 2013** Interviews (note: SC46 is proposed to be scheduled for 8-12 April.)
- 3rd/4th week of March 2013** Allow 2 weeks for thorough reference checks of selected candidate(s) from recent employers, etc. Consider who will perform these reference checks.
- SC46** SC46 makes selection of the new SG.
- May – June 2013** Period to allow successful candidate to make the transition from his/her current assignment to Ramsar.
- 9 July 2013** Incoming SG begins mentoring period
- 22 July 2013** Mr. Tiéga's contract ends.
- 23 July 2013** New SG assumes duties as official SG.