

Regional categorization

Action requested:

Standing Committee is invited to note the request of Israel to move to the European regional grouping, and the drafting of a Resolution to COP12 to amend the existing regional grouping in order to accommodate this request.

1. During the 7th Conference of Parties (COP7) in 1999, Contracting Parties adopted 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*. One of the main actions from this Resolution was the establishment of regional groupings for Contracting Parties, in order to promote the effective functioning of the Convention. The regional groupings that were decided and which remain in 2014 are:
 1. Africa
 2. Asia
 3. Neotropics
 4. Europe
 5. North America
 6. Oceania
2. At COP11 in 2012, Resolution XI.19 on *Adjustments to the terms of Resolution VII.1 on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention* was adopted, which made amendments to Resolution VII.1 including the transfer of Azerbaijan from the Asia regional grouping to the Europe grouping.
3. In January 2014, the Ramsar Secretariat received a letter from the Director General of the Ministry of Environment of the State of Israel, stating that the Contracting Party wishes to be assigned from the Asia to the European regional grouping. The request reads as follows:

“In many UN Conventions, Agreements and fora, where regional assignment exists, Israel is included in Europe or belongs to the group of Western countries, for example, in the CITES Convention, the UN Convention for Combatting Desertification and the UN Convention on Climate Change. Also, Israel is covered by the European Regional office of UNEP. In addition, Israeli representatives have been elected to a number of posts on behalf of WEOG (Western Europe and Others Group), for example, chairperson of the Committee on Science and Technology under the UNCCD, and vice chair of the UN Forum on Forests - UNFF10. In other words, Israel’s geographic position does not always determine our regional affiliation in international fora.

As a result, we believe that the amendment to Annex 2 of Resolution XI.19 which will move Israel from its allocation in the Asia Region to allocation in the European Region, will advance Israel's implementation of the Convention which in turn, will help the Convention to achieve its overall mission.

Regardless of our affiliation, we warmly welcome cooperation and collaboration with colleagues from any part of the world who wish to work with us."

4. The Secretariat will draft a Resolution for consideration at COP12 in order to accommodate this request.