

## Report of the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee

### Day 1 – Wednesday 26 March

#### Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. The Standing Committee heard opening statements by:
  - i. **Mihail FACA**, Chair of the Standing Committee;
  - ii. **Poul ENGBERG-PEDERSEN**, IUCN Deputy Director General / Managing Director;
  - iii. **Taej MUNDKUR**, Wetlands International Programme Manager Flyways, on behalf of Ramsar IOPs;
  - iv. **Christopher BRIGGS**, Secretary General to the Ramsar Convention.

#### Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

2. **The Secretary General** proposed to move agenda item 7.4 to precede item 13.

**Decision SC47-00: The Standing Committee admitted the representative from the Czech Republic as an Alternate Member of the Standing Committee, substituting the Member representing Croatia.**

**Decision SC47-01: The Standing Committee adopted the agenda, as amended.**

#### Agenda item 3: Admission of observers

3. **The Secretary General** noted as observers:
  - i. States which are not Contracting Parties: Afghanistan, DPR Korea.
  - ii. Other observers: Gyeongnam Ramsar Environmental Foundation, Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia, UNEP, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, three consultants to the Secretariat and the future Partnerships Coordinator.

**Decision SC47-02: The Standing Committee admitted the Observers as listed by the Secretary General.**

#### Agenda item 4: Report of the Management Working Group

4. **The Chair** introduced the report that the Management Working Group had prepared for Standing Committee in response to Docs. SC47-02 and SC47-03, and invited comments.
5. Following comments on a number of issues covered by the report, it became apparent that the Management Working Group and its Subgroups had not been able to fully discuss and agree on all issues. **The Chair** accordingly instructed the Group to continue discussions following the

session, in order to resolve outstanding questions and revise the text. He convened a further meeting of the Management Working Group prior to the Standing Committee's plenary session of 27 March, to present an amended report to be submitted to Standing Committee for a decision.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group
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6. **The Co-Chairs of the Strategic Plan Working Group (Finland and France)** introduced the report that the Strategic Plan Working Group had prepared for Standing Committee in response to Doc. SC47-04.
7. Following discussion of different approaches that might be taken, given the limited period remaining for consultation and preparation of a strategic plan prior to SC48, it became clear that the report did not reflect consensus within the Group on the approach to be followed, and that further discussion within the Working Group was needed to arrive at a consensus. **The Chair** accordingly instructed the Group to continue discussions following the plenary session, in order to resolve outstanding questions and to prepare an amended report, including draft decisions, to be submitted to Standing Committee for agreement on 27 March.

Agenda item 6: Progress with preparations for COP12: Report of the Subgroup on COP12
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8. **Uruguay**, as **Chair of the Subgroup** and **host for COP12**, introduced the country's natural heritage and its conference offering, and presented the report of the Subgroup on COP12, covering:
  - i. the commitment by Uruguay and the progress so far, including the signing of an MOU for COP12;
  - ii. the proposed dates and venue for COP12, namely 1 to 9 June 2015 in Punta del Este;
  - iii. the proposed streamlined visa system for delegates from countries without a Uruguayan consulate;
  - iv. the draft logo for COP12 and the slogan – 'Wetlands for our Future' – for COP12 and World Wetlands Day 2015. Parties discussed how best to use the logo and slogan once it is finalized, to raise the visibility of Ramsar and the upcoming COP.
9. The report addressed issues related to the outstanding required funding for COP12:
  - i. It noted the Subgroup's preference for the fullest possible reporting by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin team.
  - ii. It noted that the funding of a logistics coordinator to be based in the Secretariat for the six months up to COP12 would be addressed by the Subgroup on Finance.
  - iii. **Switzerland** confirmed that it would be providing an additional voluntary contribution of CHF 100,000 for translation of documents for COP12, and also contributing to pre-COP meeting costs, as well as delegate travel for African delegates representing Parties without arrears.
  - iv. **Uruguay** proposed a "paperless" COP with delegates accessing documents online, following successful experience at the same venue.
10. Parties joined in congratulating Uruguay on its achievements. They looked forward to the work ahead and offered their continuing support.

**Decision SC47-03: The Standing Committee:**

- a) Recognized with appreciation the progress reported, and the efforts made by Uruguay, as well as the early signature of a Memorandum of Understanding for COP12;
- b) Approved the dates of COP12 in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 1 to 9 June 2015;
- c) Approved the logo and slogan “Wetlands for our Future” as the theme for COP12 and World Wetlands Day 2015;
- d) Approved the holding of a “paperless” COP12;
- e) Recognized the progress and ongoing efforts to close the gap in the budget for COP12 and recommended that the Subgroup on Finance consider additional ways to close the gap;
- f) Approved the Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards: categories, criteria and nomination procedures with minor amendments.

Agenda item 7.1: Streamlining COP12 Draft Resolution style and presentation
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- 11. The **Secretariat Documentation Officer Edmund JENNINGS** presented the proposed format changes for Draft Resolutions outlined in Doc. SC47-07. **Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, South Africa, Switzerland** and **the USA** shared concerns over the proposed new format, pointing out that change from standard practice could undermine the authority of the Convention and hinder synergies with others. They agreed that the context provided by the background preamble should necessarily precede operative paragraphs, and that adding a summary paragraph would complicate rather than simplify the implementation of a resolution. **Switzerland** noted that the UNEP resolution model might offer a compromise, whereby a shorter preamble is accompanied by a background note until the resolution is approved. **The USA** expressed interest in this model, but noted that the resulting draft document might not be shorter overall.
- 12. The Standing Committee agreed on the need to keep Draft Resolutions, STRP-driven guidelines and other documents as short and focused as possible, and to prioritize those with the greatest strategic value. They confirmed interest in imposing page limits for documents.

**Decision SC47-04: The Standing Committee:**

- a) **Declined the Secretariat’s proposal for a new format for Draft Resolutions;**
- b) **Asked the Secretariat to work, as proposed, towards shorter Draft Resolutions and other COP12 documents.**

Agenda item 7.3: Regional Categorization
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- 13. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania Lew YOUNG** summarized Doc. SC47-09, which invites the Standing Committee to note the request of Israel to move to the European regional grouping, and suggests the preparation of a Draft Resolution to amend the existing regional groupings in order to accommodate this request.

**Decision SC47-05: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a Draft Resolution amending the status of Israel within the Ramsar regional groupings, to be submitted for approval at SC48 for forwarding to COP12.**

Agenda item 7.2: Draft Resolutions anticipated for COP12 consideration
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- 14. **The Secretary General** invited the Standing Committee to comment on the list of anticipated Draft Resolutions included in Doc. SC47-08.

15. **Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Japan, South Africa, Tunisia and the USA** proposed amendments to the list, and asked the Secretariat to present an accordingly revised table later in the meeting. It was agreed that the author of each item proposed should be listed in a separate column of the table.
16. **The Chair of the STRP** noted that only item 9 (Mainstreaming the “Integrated Framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication” (Resolution XI.13)...) is to be drafted by the STRP at the request of SC46. He confirmed that STRP members stand ready to assist drafters.
17. **Mexico** noted that it was considering a possible submission on minimal ecological flow; it will seek to establish the interest of Parties with the help of the Secretariat before preparing any Draft Resolution.

**Decision SC47-06: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised list of proposed Draft Resolutions, taking into account comments made during the meeting and by email, and including the author of each item, to be tabled prior to the end of SC47.**

Agenda item 7.5: COP12 Draft Resolution on “Wetlands and disaster risk reduction” submitted by the Philippines
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18. **The Philippines** made a presentation summarizing the contents of its proposed Draft Resolution, and expressed hope that the adoption of such a decision would lead to a set of guidelines for achieving disaster risk reduction through the wise use of wetlands.
19. Before closing the session, **the Chair** invited all Parties to support the Philippines in the pursuit of this objective.

## Day 2 – Thursday 27 March

20. **The Chair** convened the session and called upon the Secretary General .
21. **The Secretary General** confirmed that the Secretariat was preparing a new list of proposed Draft Resolutions for COP12 consideration, to amend Doc. SC47-08 as agreed at agenda item 7.2.
22. **The Secretary General** thanked the Philippines for presenting the Draft Resolution on wetlands and disaster risk reduction at the end of the preceding session, and invited the Standing Committee to pass any comments and suggestions to the Philippines. The Draft Resolution will be reviewed and updated for submission to SC48.

Agenda item 4: Report of the Management Working Group
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23. **The Secretary General** introduced the revised report of the Management Working Group, and noted a correction which the Management Working Group had agreed, to replace the phrase

from the second bullet point of item (f) “subject to the availability of funding resources” with “subject to the availability of resources”.

24. **South Africa** proposed an amendment to item (g) to include the phrase “to consider the options for the hosting at COPs of a high-level segment”. **Guinea** supported the proposal, noting the high potential impact of high-level segments at COPs. **The Chair** recalled that the Management Working Group had already approved the report, and so any further revision of the report would need to be discussed again by that Group with the support of Parties. **Denmark** suggested as a procedural solution to reflect the proposal within the list of draft resolutions which was being revised. **Chile** noted that the relevant draft resolution could refer to high-level meetings as an optional element which COP organisers might wish to include. **The Chair** expressed appreciation for the drive shown by African Parties, but proposed to approve the report with the noted correction, and to include a note within the revised list of Draft Resolutions that any hosting country, having resources and capacity to do so, can consider including a high-level segment within the COP.

**Decision SC47-07: The Standing Committee decided:**

Concerning the report of the Review Committee on delivery of scientific and technical advice:

- a) **To confirm the process recommended by the Review Committee on the delivery of scientific and technical advice (Resolution XI.16) to have a shortlist of candidates to discuss with the Chair, Secretary General, STRP Chair and Senior Regional Advisers, and to make decisions on the consultants to be hired by the close of SC47, and further requested the Review Committee to report on progress at SC48.**

Concerning accommodation of UN Languages under Resolution XI.1:

- b) **to address the longstanding differences in treatment of the three official Convention languages;**
- c) **to allocate resources from the current budget surplus to fund the costs of translating SC48 documents into French and Spanish;**
- d) **to instruct the Secretariat to include within all draft core budget scenarios for 2016–2018, prepared for Parties’ consideration at SC48, the costs of translating all SC documents into French and Spanish;**
- e) **to continue considering translation of additional STRP documents into French and Spanish, based on inputs by the Secretariat and the STRP, with a view to reviewing this issue at SC48; and**
- f) **to request the Secretariat to prepare a draft text for a Resolution in response to Resolution XI.1 for the consideration of SC48, addressing accommodation of the Arabic Language into the Convention, supported by:**
- **analysis of legal considerations in relation to the Convention text as well as COP Resolutions including the Rules of Procedure;**
  - **options for a step-by-step introduction of Arabic into the work of the Convention, subject to the availability of resources.**

Concerning Visibility & Stature and Synergies:

- g) **to address these issues within the Strategic Plan Working Group and in follow-up to Resolution XI.1 for discussion at SC48 as appropriate.**

Concerning the Ramsar–IUCN Task Force:

- h) to continue the negotiations on improving operations and to report on progress at SC48.**

Agenda item 5: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group
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25. **The Co-Chairs of the Strategic Plan Working Group** summarized the Group’s revised report.
26. Parties proposed amendments to the wording of the report to express more clearly the outcome of the discussions of the Working Group. **South Africa** noted that in item (ix) of para.10 the wording had mistakenly merged the two issues of communication challenges and the tightness of the planning timeframe. **The USA** proposed to reflect this by substituting “the communication challenges due to the tight plan” with “the challenges associated with communications and with the tight timeframe”. **The Chair** further noted that the decision must mention the possibility that timetables would be adapted; **Finland** proposed to reflect this by amending item (ii) from “to approve the revised workplan” to “to approve the revised draft workplan”. The Standing Committee approved the report subject to the amendments.

**Decision SC47-08: the Standing Committee approved the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG) and agreed:**

- i) to approve the terms of reference of the SPWG;**
- ii) to approve the revised draft workplan;**
- iii) to allocate the funds needed to implement the revised workplan;**
- iv) to request the SPWG to prepare a new Strategic Plan for the period of two triennia 2016–2021, and to take into account the elements of the discussion of the SPWG meeting:**
  - **A review and evaluation of the current Plan and its implementation, and identification of those strategies in the current Plan of greatest importance over the coming years;**
  - **A review of new issues which have emerged since the current Plan was approved;**
  - **Specific focus on strategies to improve the visibility and stature of the Convention, and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and international entities;**
  - **A consideration of how the Plan might best relate to ongoing Strategic Plans and processes of other Conventions;**
  - **The appropriate representation of global, regional and national aspirations in the Strategic Plan;**
  - **There were calls for a shorter, simpler and more engaging plan, using language and consultation formats similar to the other MEAs.**
- v) to invite all Parties to complete the questionnaire by 15 April;**
- vi) to encourage all Parties to submit their National Reports, if possible, by 1 August, so that they can be used for preparation of the strategic plan;**
- vii) to ensure synergies with the STRP review process;**
- viii) to consult the Ramsar Regional Centres in preparing the strategic plan;**
- ix) to recognize the challenges associated with communication and with the tight timeframe, especially for the Africa Region, and to take that into consideration in the consultation plan and process.**

Agenda item 8: Financial matters: Report of the Subgroup on Finance
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27. **The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance (Canada)** introduced the report, after noting that the Subgroup would meet again during the break to discuss budget scenarios for 2016-2018. The report covered the following issues:
- i. 2013 year-end accounting;
  - ii. 2014 core budget;
  - iii. 2014 core budget: regional initiatives;
  - iv. 2014 non-core budget;
  - v. COP12 discussions;
  - vi. Reallocation of surplus funds;
  - vii. Small Grants Fund;
  - viii. Outstanding contributions;
  - ix. Preparations for 2016-2018 budget.
28. Regarding the first seven items, **Argentina, France, South Africa** and **Tunisia** made interventions. **South Africa** thanked the Chair of the Subgroup for the report, and underlined that Parties in Africa have identified a number of fora where the non-payment of annual contributions can be brought to the attention of higher level government officials such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the African Union. **Argentina** echoed these thanks and reported that, in the context of the 2014 core budget, it is now set to pay its contributions for 2011-2013. **France** noted that one solution to the challenge of closing the COP12 funding gap would be to shorten COP12. Regarding Regional Initiatives, **France** noted that they do serve the implementation of the Convention, and that they need the formal support of the Secretariat, especially in the development of ties with other organizations as their own status is often too unclear for formal collaborative relationships. **Tunisia** echoed this view, noting the struggles of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) for deserved financial and management support. **The Chair** noted that further consideration of regional initiatives would follow at agenda item 14.4.
29. Regarding the payment of outstanding contributions, **Argentina, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Fiji, Guinea, Indonesia, Switzerland, Tunisia** and **WWF International** made interventions encouraging a collaborative and incentive-based response to non-payment of contributions. **South Africa** suggested that the itineraries of Secretariat staff should try to include countries with problems of unpaid contributions and to include attendance at meetings where high level people may be approached with the same objective, such as AMCEN, UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
30. Concerning 2013 year-end accounting:

**Decision SC47-09: The Standing Committee approved the 2013 financial statements, subject to any final minor adjustments and audit completion, and allocations of the surplus reserve fund balance of CHF 291,000 as at 31 December 2013.**

31. Concerning the 2014 core budget / Regional Initiatives:

**Decision SC47-10: The Standing Committee agreed to no changes to the COP11 approved core budget for Regional Initiatives for 2014, and endorsed the 2014 funds allocated as below:**

- |                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| • East African centre          | CHF 28,000 |
| • Niger river basin network    | CHF 30,000 |
| • La Plata river basin network | CHF 16,000 |

- Caribbean network CHF 16,000
- Mangroves and reefs network (Americas)\* CHF 20,000
- Carpathian Wetland Initiative CHF 10,000

(\* Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs Ecosystems)

32. Concerning the 2014 core budget:

**Decision SC47-11: The Standing Committee confirmed the 2014 budget as approved at COP11, recognising that the line item budgeting for a CHF 75,000 increase to the reserve fund in 2014 will not be required, and should be reallocated.**

33. Concerning the 2014 non-core budget:

**Decision SC47-12: The Standing Committee made no changes to budgeted non-core budget lines in the COP11 adopted budget, noting that the list of funding needs in Resolution XI.2 Annex III is not in any order of priority.**

34. Concerning COP12 discussions:

**Decision SC47-13: The Standing Committee noted the COP12 Administrative Budget shortfall of some USD 350,000 to USD 370,000, and the three key unfunded activities, and welcomed the generosity of Switzerland and Uruguay at SC47 in offering to reduce this shortfall.**

**Decision SC47-14: The Standing Committee noted the need to raise a further CHF 1.2 million during 2014 and 2015 for the Pre-COP regional meetings and sponsoring of delegates to COP, and encouraged Parties and Secretariat to make COP 12 fundraising a priority.**

35. Concerning the reallocation of surplus funds:

**Decision SC47-15: The Standing Committee directed that the surplus be allocated as follows:**

- Strategic Plan CHF 76,000
- Ramsar Advisory Missions CHF 50,000
- Translation (French and Spanish) of SC 48 documents CHF 90,000
- COP12 delivery CHF 150,000

**The Standing Committee asked the Secretary General (consulting with the Executive Team as necessary) to determine which of the three urgent, unfunded needs for COP12 delivery (logistics coordination, regional meeting costs, Earth Negotiations Bulletin participation) most need this funding, taking into account other voluntary contributions received for COP12 during 2014.**

36. Concerning the Small Grants Fund:

**Decision SC47-16: The Standing Committee requested an information paper for SC48 on the future of the Small Grants Fund, and for the Secretariat and Subgroup to explore further the scope for combining the funds to reap administrative cost benefits whilst still responding to the specific needs of Ramsar donors and recipients.**

37. Concerning outstanding contributions:



**Decision SC47-17: The Standing Committee noted the current status of Parties' outstanding annual contributions and encouraged the Secretariat, working with Finance Subgroup members, to continue to take collaborative actions to make progress to resolve this issue. The Standing Committee noted the Subgroup's request for prioritizing Contracting Parties that have never paid, and underlined its hope for progress by Parties that have been in arrears for more than three years.**

**The Standing Committee noted the actions of Switzerland, restricting use of its additional voluntary contributions to African Contracting Parties whose contributions have been fully paid up. The Standing Committee hoped that this action will support other efforts of the Secretariat.**

Agenda item 9: Report of the Secretary General on actions and future strategy

38. **The Secretary General** presented his vision for the Convention. **Uruguay, Guatemala, Chile, South Africa, Denmark, USA, Switzerland, Cuba, UAE, China, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Finland, Fiji, Uganda, Oman** and **WWF International**, on behalf of the IOPs, made interventions in support of the vision and the planned efforts to realize it.
39. The Standing Committee acknowledged the importance of taking innovative and inclusive action on the vision's four priorities of communication, capacity building and partnerships as well as measuring and valuing wetlands, while respecting the financial limitations of Parties and funders.

Agenda item 10: Secretariat Work Plan 2014

40. **The Secretary General** invited comments on the workplan presented in Doc.SC47-15. **Finland** and **Tunisia** proposed to add text reflecting key tasks for 2014.

**Decision SC47-18: The Standing Committee noted the workplan and asked the Secretariat to add text covering its work in preparation of the new Strategic Plan and on preparing a report for COP12 on implementation of COP11 resolutions.**

Agenda item 11: Report of Ramsar-IUCN Task Force on improving operations

41. **The Secretary General** reported on the progress of the Ramsar-IUCN Task Force, and took the opportunity to thank IUCN for its continuing help and support. He reported successful collaboration on finance and human resources, and hoped to ensure the quick resolution of financial reporting issues and the negotiation of ongoing hosting charges. He highlighted the ongoing programme of improvements to the Secretariat office space and improved signage on the shared headquarters of IUCN and Ramsar.
42. He noted the collaboration on an envisaged 'Ramsar Water Initiative' and other projects on wetlands and water. IUCN is giving valuable support through its comparative analysis of the New York, Helsinki and Ramsar Conventions.

Agenda item 12.1: Report of the STRP Oversight Committee

43. **The Chair of the STRP** delivered the report, explaining the composition of the Oversight Committee. Noting that the Deputy Secretary General has been on sick leave and wishing him well, he confirmed that the STRP was continuing to make progress. He explained that one of the functions of the Committee was to confirm appointments of STRP members, and he noted the appointment of **Stefano BARCHIESI of IUCN's Global Water Programme** as the new IUCN representative. He noted that another area of responsibility of the Committee, to advise on and approve STRP funds, would be covered in his following report.

**Decision SC47-19: The Standing Committee thanked the STRP for its work and endorsed the choice of the new member representing IUCN.**

Agenda item 12.1: Report of the STRP Chair
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44. **The STRP Chair** summarized progress with STRP activities in 2013 including:
- i. The launch of the STRP Platform;
  - ii. The three STRP Newsletter editions published;
  - iii. The four STRP webinars delivered;
  - iv. The Asia Regional Workshop on Scientific and Technical Support for the Implementation of the Convention;
  - v. The Chair's visit to Oman;
  - vi. IPBES engagement (as an observer to the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and a participant at IPBES-2).
45. **The STRP Chair** outlined the budget for 2013 and 2014 and the current status of the nine priority tasks:
- i. On the State of the World's Wetlands, a first factsheet on wetland extent will be published shortly.
  - ii. On assessing and supporting the capacity-building and knowledge-sharing needs of Contracting Parties: the task will wait until the Resolution XI.16 review is delivered, but other CEPA-related tasks are being progressed (capacity building for STRP National Focal Points, and preparation of training materials).
  - iii. Invasive species: a briefing note is being drafted.
  - iv. Implementation of the Ramsar Information Sheet 2012 revision has been completed.
  - v. On climate change, a workshop and briefing note or Ramsar Technical Report are planned on the relevance to Ramsar of other MEAs' decisions.
  - vi. On the development of a strategy for engaging in the global water debate, a consultant has been engaged and a first draft is expected by early June.
  - vii. Consultants have also been engaged to review guidance on wetlands and poverty eradication and on monitoring for change in ecological character.
  - viii. Other tasks have progressed through synergies, for example with IWMI on agriculture and wetlands.
46. He then noted the date for STRP 18 (the week of 8-12 September), and invited the Standing Committee to identify any possible sources of funding in the absence of any voluntary contributions at this time.
47. **Finland, Oman, the Philippines and the USA** made interventions thanking the STRP for its technical support, noting the progress being made and the effective new communications channels including the STRP Platform and the webinar series, welcoming efforts to publish

materials in different languages with appropriate Ramsar branding, and calling for ongoing regionally-balanced programmes and transparent reports on funding.

**Decision SC47-20: The Standing Committee noted the STRP Chair's report, and his request for Contracting Parties to consider possible ways of sourcing funding for implementation of the highest priority tasks as identified by Standing Committee 46 Decision 14.**

Agenda item 7.4: Application from the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) for IOP status

48. **The Secretary General** introduced the application, and noted that it was received in October 2013 and follows the requirements of Resolution VII.3. He outlined the role of WWT through the history of the Convention and its recent work in support of Convention objectives. He noted the presence of **WWT Executive Director Martin SPRAY** and asked the Standing Committee to consider the application.
49. In response to the USA's question on the reasons behind this application, **the WWT Executive Director** cited the harmony between WWT's focus and the new Secretary General's vision. The IOP status would enable WWT to further support the Convention.
50. In response to questions from Neotropics Parties, **the WWT Executive Director** reported that it is taking action to extend its activities in the region.

**Decision SC47-21: The Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to prepare a Draft Resolution for SC48 and COP12 on WWT's application for IOP status.**

Agenda item 13.1: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

51. **The Vice Chair of the Standing Committee**, as **Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel**, outlined the information in Doc. SC47-18, and in particular the progress in preparing the new CEPA Programme for 2016-2021. She noted the Programme's focus on participation and the participatory nature of planning process thus far.
52. **Finland** and **the USA** made interventions confirming that the finalization of the new Programme should go hand in hand with the Strategic Plan development process, and that CEPA and the STRP should work together in developing plans for communicating scientific and technical knowledge.

**Decision SC47-22: The Standing Committee noted the report and the progress in the preparation of the new CEPA Programme.**

Agenda item 13.2: World Wetlands Day 2015

53. The Standing Committee agreed that discussion of the World Wetlands Day theme was not needed as its alignment to the COP12 theme had already been agreed.

**Decision SC47-23: The Standing Committee approved the theme for World Wetlands Day 2015 as 'Wetlands for our Future', to correspond with the theme for COP12.**

Agenda item 13.3: Ramsar web site redevelopment

54. The Secretariat's **Communications Officer Oana BARSIN** updated the Standing Committee on progress since SC46 and showed examples of the design of the new site on different platforms. She outlined ongoing tasks including the categorization of content to support searching, and proposed a launch in summer 2014.
55. In response to interventions by **Chile, Finland, Guatemala, Oman and the USA**, she confirmed that the new site would be able to support new languages and scripts, detailed analysis of usage, and specific interactive modules. She noted the feedback on the design and the need to reflect in it the interaction between people and wetlands.

Agenda item 14.1: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
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56. **The STRP Chair** introduced Doc. SC47-19 and highlighted three points:
- i. He reported that the Ramsar STRP and Secretariat fit the definition of "relevant stakeholders" to make nominations. They have already submitted one nomination, while other selected nominees have had to withdraw due to the requirement to pay for their own travel to meetings. Some Contracting Parties which are also members of IPBES have submitted nominations in response to a call by the STRP and Secretariat.
  - ii. He then outlined the STRP's proposed interim guidelines for submission of proposals.
  - iii. He noted that based on Resolution XI.6, it was proposed that a representative be appointed to attend IPBES meetings.
57. **Argentina, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Japan and the USA** sought clarification and gave input on procedures and the means by which Ramsar and IPBES bodies might best interact. They noted that savings could be realized by limiting attendance at IPBES meetings and encouraging IPBES to enable online participation. **The USA** also indicated that it would not support the proposals in SC47-19 paras. 7 and 8 on the interaction between IPBES and the MEAs.
58. **The STRP Chair** clarified that:
- i. Thematic priorities were identified in terms of the timelines for their completion.
  - ii. IPBES is expected to respond shortly on nominations by Contracting Parties.
  - iii. If an STRP member submits a proposal they would not take part in the STRP's review process.

**Decision SC47-24: The Standing Committee noted the report and approved the interim guidelines for submission of proposals to IPBES, and responded to the Secretary General's request for guidance on determining the appropriate interaction between bodies of IPBES and the multilateral environmental agreements.**

Agenda item 14.3: Report of the Culture Working Group
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59. The **Senior Regional Advisor for Europe Tobias SALATHÉ** summarized Doc. SC47-20.
60. **Argentina, Japan and Tunisia** noted examples of effective Ramsar Culture Network activities and collaborations in their countries and the Network's valuable work with the World Heritage

Centre. In response to enquiries from these Parties and **the USA**, the Senior Regional Advisor for Europe clarified that:

- i. Secretariat input was so far no more than 5% of one person's time.
- ii. The main outputs were case studies in local languages and sometimes also English.
- iii. Input from other regions would reduce the current emphasis on activities in Europe.

**Decision SC47-25: The Standing Committee noted the progress report presented, and expressed support for the activities of the Ramsar Culture Network and its cooperation with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.**

Agenda item 14.1: Regional Initiatives (Decision SC46-13)
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61. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Europe** summarized Doc. SC47-21. **The Secretary General** noted that the Finance Subgroup had endorsed the proposed allocations to regional initiatives.
62. **Argentina, Chile, France, Indonesia, Slovakia** and **the USA** underlined the important roles of regional initiatives and the value of financial and other support from the Secretariat, and proposed amendments to the draft decision.

**Decision SC47-26: The Standing Committee accepted the annual reports of progress and endorsed the active four regional centres and eleven regional networks as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 and operating in the framework of the Convention during this period.**

The Standing Committee asked the Secretariat to:

- a) prepare an information document with proposals for virtually linking Ramsar regional centres, considering cost implications, and to submit it to SC48 for subsequent submission to COP12; and
- b) to help regional initiatives to develop formal ties with regional conventions so as to strengthen their local rootedness and visibility and to provide improvement to MEA consistency.

The Standing Committee approved the allocations endorsed by the Subgroup on Finance from Ramsar core budget line D ("Support to regional initiative network and centres") to initiatives for their activities in 2014:

• East African centre	CHF 28,000
• Niger river basin network	CHF 30,000
• La Plata river basin network	CHF 16,000
• Caribbean network	CHF 16,000
• Mangroves and reefs network (Americas)*	CHF 20,000
• Carpathian Wetland Initiative	CHF 10,000

(\* Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs Ecosystems)

### Day 3 – Friday 28 March

Agenda item 14.2: Report on Republic of Korea workshop on wetland city accreditation
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63. **The Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania** updated the Standing Committee following the previous day's meeting on the proposed accreditation scheme, and outlined the need to prepare a document with recommendations for SC48.
64. **Chile, Denmark, Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Tunisia, the USA and WWF International** made interventions which reflected interest in an accreditation or award scheme but also concern over the resources required to realize it. They underlined the importance of the participation of local communities and also of a wide range of local actors, and considered how such a scheme might affect the designation of Ramsar Sites. They requested a further proposal by the Secretariat including clearer definitions, criteria and resource considerations.

**Decision SC47-27: The Standing Committee noted the presentation and asked the Secretariat to prepare for SC48 a document which takes its comments into account.**

Agenda item 15.1: The status of Ramsar Sites
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65. The **Regional Affairs Officer Alexia DUFOUR** presented an update based on Doc. SC47-22.
66. **South Africa** updated the Standing Committee on actions since SC46 regarding its two sites on the Montreux Record, which will hopefully lead to the removal of the sites from the Record. At Blesbokspruit an environmental management plan has been compiled and is awaiting approval, while a process to declare Orange River Mouth as a nature reserve, which involves the development of a management plan, is at an advanced stage. She also updated the Standing Committee on action taken with regard to an Article 3.2 report pertaining to Seekoivlei Ramsar Site. A request for a written update on the matter has been submitted to the relevant Management Authority. No response has been received to date.
67. **Japan** reported on the situation at Yakushima Nagata-hama, an Article 3.2 Site designated as a turtle nesting beach. The adjacent forest of an endangered pine tree species is protected by insecticide spraying. From next year the prefecture will use a less toxic pesticide and will change from spraying to trunk injection. No negative impact on sea turtles due to this pesticide use has been reported.
68. **Burundi** noted that the Rusizi National Park Site was the focus of a Ramsar Advisory Mission last year, but that progress since had been affected by a ministerial change.
69. **Guinea** noted that the country had six threatened Sites, and requested a RAM to analyze the situation and offer advice on challenges to their health. The representative of **WWF International** supported this request, and warned that more and more Ramsar Sites will merit such Missions in future. He highlighted the recent RAM to Virunga in the Democratic Republic of Congo, carried out in effective collaboration with the World Heritage Centre.
70. Regarding the updating of Ramsar Site information, **South Africa** indicated that of the 21 Sites on its territory, 20 require updating of RISs. Consequently, requests for updates have been submitted to the relevant Management Authorities for completion by 28 November 2014. **Tunisia** highlighted its need for support in updating the RISs for the 19 Sites designated in 2007.

71. **Finland and the USA** reported that they will await the new RSIS before completing outstanding updates, in order to economize on efforts.
72. **The Secretary General** thanked Parties for their efforts, but expressed concern at the number of Ramsar Sites for which an RIS had never been submitted. He hoped for substantial progress on resolving this issue by COP12, as well as updating of existing RISs as required.
73. **Fiji** noted on behalf of the Oceania sub-region that Australia had updated RISs for four Sites since the report was compiled.
74. Regarding the ongoing timetable for such reports, **the Regional Affairs Officer** confirmed that it would not be possible to compile the findings of national reports before the pre-COP regional meetings and SC48; the Ramsar Sites update for COP12 would instead reflect the national reports and Site designations and updates up to early 2015.

Agenda item 15.2: Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) redevelopment
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75. **The Regional Affairs Officer** presented a progress report, showing page designs and contents, and outlining the remaining process until the completion of the project. She highlighted new features including better sharing of information with the new Ramsar web site, the assisted selection of species and their status, and the process for offline compilation.
76. **Chile, Denmark and Switzerland** welcomed the initiative and the presentation. In response to queries from **Argentina, the Czech Republic, Oman, and Tunisia, the Regional Affairs Officer** reported that:
  - i. There would be no major changes in the extent of the questionnaire or the roles of Administrative Authorities;
  - ii. The system had performed well in tests from locations with low-speed internet access, and the offline form would be available in 2014;
  - iii. The new system would be hosted by the project implementing partner, UNEP/GRID.

Agenda item 16.1: Partnerships
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77. The **Ramsar Project Management Officer Lynn SORRENTINO** presented an update on the Ramsar – Danone-Evian partnership since June 2013. She summarized the focus for 2013 and 2014 on communications and visibility (including support for World Wetlands Day activities and social media), field activities and improving recognition of the Convention.
78. **Chile** expressed thanks for the ongoing contribution of Danone-Evian to the objectives of the Convention.

**Decision SC47-28: The Standing Committee noted progress reports concerning:**

- **The Status of Ramsar Sites (including updates from Standing Committee participants)**
- **Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) redevelopment;**
- **The Ramsar – Danone-Evian Partnership.**

Agenda item 17.1: Date and venue of SC48
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**Decision SC47-29: The Standing Committee agreed to reconvene for its 48<sup>th</sup> meeting from 26 to 30 January 2015, in Gland.**

Agenda item 7.2: Draft Resolutions anticipated for COP12 consideration (continued)

79. **The Secretary General** outlined the new table (Doc.SC47-08 Rev.1) resulting from the earlier inputs of the Standing Committee. He noted that the table would remain a “living document” to be amended and re-published as needed.
80. **Colombia, Denmark, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, the UAE and the USA** proposed further amendments to the table, to the effect that:
- i. On item 1 *Reform and revision of Rules of Procedure*, more information was needed to clarify the intent and distinguish it from the standard update of the Rules of Procedure at each COP, which should remain if necessary. Rules of procedure should also cover the CEPA Oversight Panel.
  - ii. The decision on keeping items 2 and 3 separate (*Languages and Additional follow-up*, which both stem from Resolution XI.1) should be kept open.
  - iii. **South Africa** proposed a Draft Resolution on resource mobilization. It was noted that a good model is provided by the UN Forum on Forests.
  - iv. On item 11 *Criteria for Ramsar Sites*, **Switzerland** proposed to add criteria on basin management and contribution to ecological networks. Two parties proposed to remove the reference to “post-2015 implementation” to avoid being seen to pre-empt the New York process on SDGs.
  - v. **WWF international** noted that **Greece** is preparing a Draft Resolution on the conservation of small Mediterranean island wetlands.
  - vi. The Standing Committee agreed that any Parties proposing new Draft Resolutions or elements of items should draft them, keeping in mind the deadline for presentation to the Secretariat of 60 days before SC48.
  - vii. **The Republic of Korea** offered to review item 15 (*Wetland city / village accreditation*); **the UAE** offered to review item 2 (*Languages*).
  - viii. It was agreed to add a separate Draft Resolution on the STRP workplan.

Agenda item 17.2: Adoption of the report of the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting

81. **Argentina, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Japan, South Africa and the USA** proposed amendments to the draft list of decisions of the first and second days of SC47.
82. **The Secretary General** asked that Parties submit in writing any comments that would be necessary for the completion of the full report, and invited the Standing Committee to delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair the approval of the final report and decisions.

**Decision SC47-30: The Standing Committee accepted the decisions of the first and second days and empowered the Chair and Vice Chair to accept the decisions of the third day and approve the report for the 47<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee.**

Agenda item 17.3: Any other business



83. **Guinea** noted that Africa now has 50 Contracting Parties, and so should have five regional representatives on the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee agreed to implement this following the standard process.
84. **The UAE** expressed the will to host COP13, as a contribution to the greater visibility and accessibility of the Convention in the Arab region, and this proposal was warmly welcomed.

Agenda item 17.4: Closing remarks
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85. **The Chair** thanked the interpreters and Secretariat staff for their support.
86. **The Vice Chair** thanked the Chair for his leadership, and also the Secretary General and Secretariat for their support.
87. **The Secretary General** expressed his gratitude to the Chairs of the SC plenary meeting and subgroups, to the STRP Chair, to the IOPs for their support, to the interpreters, to IUCN as host, and to Secretariat staff, and looked forward to the 48<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee.