

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
51st Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 November 2015

SC51-17

Consultancy support for the development of a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention

Action requested:

Standing Committee is invited to advise and approve the Terms of Reference and budget for a consultancy to develop a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention.

1. At the 12th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Convention, Resolution XII.3 was adopted which noted the interest of Parties in accommodating the use of Arabic and other official UN languages into the operation of the Ramsar Convention so as to support the further development and implementation of the Convention.
2. Resolution XII.3 went on to request the Secretariat to develop a strategy, subject to the availability of resources, outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention. The Resolution also requested the Standing Committee to monitor the progress of this work and advise as necessary.
3. Attached at Annex 1 are draft Terms of Reference and budget for a consultancy to lead on the development of such a strategy and Standing Committee members are kindly requested to provide comments on this document and adopt a final version at SC51.

Annex 1

Terms of reference for consultancy support for the development of a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention

1. Background

Currently, the “official” and “working” languages of the Ramsar Convention on Wetland are English, French and Spanish. However, the Convention recognizes the importance of the work, communication materials and tools of the Convention are conducted and available in as many of the official languages of the United Nations as possible. The Convention has expressed this view through a number of documents, including:

- a. Recommendation 1.7 *A protocol on amendment procedures* [\[link\]](#) which called for the text of the Convention to be translated into the UN languages;
- b. Resolution 4.2 *Working languages of the Conference of the Contracting Parties* which decided that Spanish shall be a working language of the Conference of the Contracting Parties [\[link\]](#);
- c. Recommendation 5.15 *Working languages of the Conference of the Contracting Parties* [\[link\]](#) which called on the Convention Bureau to investigate the possibility of adopting Arabic as a working language of the Conference and also requested Arabic-speaking Parties and potential Parties to assist the Bureau in seeking the necessary funding support for the adoption of Arabic as a working language of the Conference;
- d. Resolution XI.1 *Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat* [\[link\]](#) that instructed the Standing Committee through an appropriate Working Group to develop a strategy to explore the accommodation of UN languages into the Convention;
- e. SC47-02 *Progress report: Subgroups to progress Resolution XI.1 (Convention languages, visibility and ministerial COP segment, enhancing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities)* [\[link\]](#) which presented options and recommended a course of action to the Standing Committee Management Working Group on:
 - i. Ensuring that the plenary meetings of Conference of the Parties and Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention are delivered in the three official languages; and
 - ii. Means for delivering the Ramsar Convention in additional UN Languages.
- f. Decision SC47-07 [\[link\]](#) concerning accommodation of UN Languages under Resolution XI.1:
 - i. to address the longstanding differences in treatment of the three official Convention languages;
 - ii. to allocate resources from the current budget surplus to fund the costs of translating SC48 documents into French and Spanish;

- iii. 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;
- iv. 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
- v. 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.
- g. COP12 Document 17 *Legal Brief: Opinion on the accommodation of Arabic and other UN languages into the Ramsar Convention* [\[link\]](#) which addressed the accommodation of Arabic into the Convention, supported by:
 - analysis of legal considerations in relation to the Convention text and COP Resolutions;
 - options for a step-by-step introduction of Arabic into the work of the Convention, subject to the availability of resources.”
- h. Resolution XII.3 *Enhancing the languages of the Convention and its visibility and stature, and increasing synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* [\[link\]](#) which requested the Secretariat to develop a strategy outlining the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention.

These Terms of Reference for a consultancy are prepared in response to Resolution XII.3 that calls for the development of a strategy for the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention as “official” and “working” languages.

The consultant will work under the guidance of the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention.

2. Expertise and profile of the Consultant

The consultant should have the following experience and profile:

- a. At least 10 years of experience and expertise on governmental/ intergovernmental processes and similar issues and in undertaking survey-based consultations and other forms of research;
- b. Knowledge of the scope, processes and implementation of the Ramsar Convention preferably, or other multilateral environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- c. Fully fluent in spoken and written English, with the ability to write clearly and simply in the English language; fluency in another Convention language (French and/or Spanish) is a major advantage.

3. Work to be undertaken

- a. Classifies the language needs of the Convention according to the short-, medium- and long-term work of the Convention;
- b. Identifies barriers to effective translation, publishing and interpreting of the three official languages of the Convention, and actions needed to overcome them including identification of additional resource needs and sources to accommodate inclusion of additional languages;
- c. Proposes ways forward to engage relevant Contracting Parties in finding a step-by-step integration and financing of translations at meetings, of meeting documents and as appropriate of important Ramsar information documents into additional languages; and
- d. Proposes a potential timeline for phased integration of procedural changes, key indicators, and milestones for any UN languages added.

4. Timeline

Steps	Indicative time for the work
Preparation and signature of contract	
<p>1. Meet with the Ramsar Secretariat for the organization of the work and in consultation with the Ramsar Secretariat, prepare and conduct a structured questionnaire-based survey of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the language needs of the selected Ramsar Parties for the short-, medium- and long-term; b) how other MEAs and relevant international organizations work to accommodate the use of the UN languages into their work; and c) barriers to effective translation, publishing and interpreting of the three official languages of the Convention. <p>From the results of the survey and discussions, the consultant will propose a range of options for a gradual approach to include additional UN languages into the work of the Convention. Each of these options would outline the additional actions and resources needed for a step-by-step integration and financing of interpretation at meetings, the translation of meeting documents and as appropriate, of key Ramsar documents. There also needs to be consideration of possible translation of the Ramsar website into the additional UN languages. The consultant will also use the survey results to provide options for overcoming the barriers to the full and effective use of the three existing languages of the Convention.</p> <p>All of the options provided will include a budget and timeline for the phased integration of necessary procedural changes, key indicators, and milestones associated with that option. It will also require an analysis of the possible means of financing these additional actions.</p> <p>A list of those consulted should include, among others, a cross-section of Contracting Party national focal points from countries whose first language is</p>	20 days

<p>one of the UN languages, representatives from other MEAs and relevant organizations, and Ramsar Secretariat staff as needed. The Secretariat has prepared a working list (with contact details) of the relevant Parties and organizations that would be relevant to consult.</p> <p>Consultations may be conducted by using a variety of methods, including email, telephone and face-to-face interviews, and web-based tools such as Skype, SurveyMonkey and the listserves and web-portals maintained by the Ramsar Secretariat.</p>	
2. Prepare and submit a report summarizing the consultation process results and discuss with the Ramsar Secretariat.	6 days
3. Based on the discussions with the Ramsar Secretariat, prepare a first outline draft of the Strategy for consideration by the Ramsar Secretariat.	4 days
4. On the basis of further comment from the Ramsar Secretariat, prepare a second draft of the Strategy that will be provided to the Management Working Group for further discussions.	3 days
5. Presentation of the revised draft of the Strategy to the 52 nd meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee (SC52). Resource permitting, the consultant could participate and present the draft Strategy at the meeting.	5 days
6. From the comments received at SC52, develop the final draft of the Strategy.	4 days

5. Consultant deliverables

- a. Reports from the consultation survey and meetings with the various stakeholder groups;
- b. Detailed draft of Strategy for the potential phased integration of Arabic or other UN languages into the work of the Convention.

6. Budget

The lump sum for the consultancy is CHF 30,000 based on above work and estimated 42 days work over three months, including attendance at SC52 to present work on Strategy.