

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

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Briefing for new members on the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee Chairs and members

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to make use of this background document and its suggestions, to help guide them in the conduct of their meetings.

1. The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention was established by Resolution 3.3 (Regina, 1987) to oversee Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat between ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), within the framework set by the COP at each of its meetings.
2. The regional composition, functions, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and its members are governed by Resolution XII.4 (2015), which supersedes the former arrangements set out in Resolution VII.1 (1999) and Resolution XI.19 (2012).
3. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, will be governed, *mutatis mutandis*, by the Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Convention (see www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ramsar_rules_of_procedure_e.pdf).
4. Resolution XII.4 adopted revised texts on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Ramsar Standing Committee and its appended list of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties belonging to the six Ramsar regional groups.
5. Annex 4 of Resolution XII.4 also adopted an indicative schedule for Standing Committee intersessional meetings post-2015, as follows (based upon future cycles being three calendar years, with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties in May/June of the final year of each cycle):

	General timelines, post-2015	2016-2018 triennium
First full meeting	6 months after COP	SC51 – November 2015
Second full meeting	20 months after COP	SC52 – February 2017
Subgroup on COP (if required)	1 year before COP	Subgroup on COP13 (if required) – June 2017
Third full meeting	5 months before COP	SC53 – January 2018
Pre-COP meeting	Immediately prior to COP, at COP venue	SC54 – June 2018

6. Also relevant to the work of the Standing Committee are Resolution IX.24 (2005), which

established a Management Working Group reporting to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties; and Resolution X.4 (2008), which established a Transition Committee of the Management Working Group. In Resolutions XI.19 and XII.4, the Parties recognized that aspects of the work of those groups are also embodied in the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee itself, and it was noted that intersessional Standing Committee oversight of the Secretariat is now conducted on its behalf between meetings of the Standing Committee by its Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of Subgroup on Finance) with the Secretary General.

Functions of the Standing Committee

7. In Resolution XII.4 Annex 1, para. 19, the Parties updated the functions of the Standing Committee, which are to:
 - a. carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval and noting that the Standing Committee is not mandated either to take decisions that would normally be taken by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or to amend any decision taken by the Conference of the Parties;
 - b. make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next COP;
 - c. supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Parties, the implementation of activities by the Secretariat, the execution of the Secretariat's budget, and conduct of the Secretariat's programmes;
 - d. provide guidance and advice to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
 - e. act as Conference Bureau at COPs in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
 - f. establish subgroups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
 - g. promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - h. approve the work plan of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
 - i. adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;
 - j. review each triennium the criteria for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18 and select the laureates; and
 - k. report to the COP on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee (from Resolution XII.4, Annex 3)

8. The Contracting Parties that have accepted to be elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee have the following tasks:
 - a. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives, and to make every effort that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
 - b. When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other Regional Representative(s).
 - c. To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one Regional Representative, they will agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each Regional Representative.
 - d. To solicit the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
 - e. To advise the Secretariat in setting the agenda of regional meetings.
 - f. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.
 - g. To provide advice as requested by the Chairperson and/or the chairs of subgroups and/or the Secretariat of the Convention.
 - h. In the regions concerned, to make deliberate efforts to encourage other countries to join the Convention.
9. Following consultations in accordance with point 8.c. above, Standing Committee members' responsibilities for regular contacts and consultations with other Contracting Parties have been agreed as follows:

Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Senegal, Seychelles, and Tunisia (Alternate members: Central African Republic, Uganda, Mali, Botswana and Egypt)

Democratic Republic of Congo represents: Cameroon, Central African Republic (Alternate), Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe

Kenya represents: Djibouti, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda (Alternate) and United Republic of Tanzania

Senegal represents: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali (Alternate), Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo

Seychelles represents: Botswana (Alternate), Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Tunisia represents: Algeria, Egypt (Alternate), Libya, Morocco, Sudan and South Sudan

Asia: Nepal, Republic of Korea, and Iraq (Alternate members: Viet Nam, Japan and Bahrain)

Nepal represents : South and Southeast Asia : Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam (Alternate)

Republic of Korea represents : East Asia : China, Japan (Alternate) and Mongolia

Iraq represents: Central and West Asia : Bahrain (Alternate), Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen

Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, and Romania (Alternate members: France, Russian Federation, Ukraine)

Armenia represents: Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine

Azerbaijan represents: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Israel, Liechtenstein, Poland, Slovakia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and the United Kingdom

Estonia represents: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Netherlands and Sweden

Romania represents: Andorra, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia and Spain

Switzerland (Permanent Observer in all meetings)

Latin America and the Caribbean : Colombia, Honduras and Suriname (Alternate members: Argentina, Costa Rica and Cuba)

Colombia represents: Argentina (Alternate), Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela

Suriname represents: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba (Alternate) Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago

Honduras represents: Costa Rica (Alternate), El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama

North America: United States of America (Alternate member: Canada)

United States of America represents: Canada (Alternate) and Mexico

Oceania: Australia (Alternate member: Samoa)

Australia represents: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa (Alternate)