

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

52nd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 13-17 June 2016

SC52-04 Rev.2

Report of the Acting Secretary General

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the Acting Secretary General's report, based upon :

- Resolution XII.4 paragraph 7.c; and
- Interim Arrangements for Secretariat Administration, a document prepared by the Executive Team and received by the Acting Secretary General on 26 November 2015.

1. The Acting Secretary General has prepared this report responding to the relevant COP12 Resolution for reporting by the Secretary General, as well as to the Interim Arrangements for Secretariat Administration as established by the Executive Committee (Annex 1).
2. Paragraph 7.c of Resolution XII.4 instructs the Secretary General to prepare reports "containing information on the progress of work of the Secretariat with focus on the main priorities adopted by the COP, the Secretariats' travelling and meetings etc., as well as the status of the core and non-core budget, and including an overview of the staff and consultancy contracts".
3. The Interim Arrangements for Secretariat Administration identified the following critical priorities for action by the Secretariat during this period (Annex 1):
 - MOU for the COP13 (and other MOUs deemed appropriate by the Executive Team);
 - An audit of the Budget to ensure it properly aligns to priorities;
 - Preparations for SC52 in 2016;
 - Complete implementation of working webpage and RSIS;
 - Review consultancies and rationalize where possible;
 - Review resource mobilization, especially as it relates to fund-raising, to ensure the capture of work undertaken already so that an incoming SG is in a position to reinvigorate this programme. This review should be undertaken in conjunction with the Resource Mobilization Working Group;
 - Evaluation of COP12.
4. The triennium workplan for the Secretariat was planned in a collaborative way with the involvement of all Secretariat staff members, guided by the goals and targets of the 4th Strategic Plan 2016-2024, as well as by the specific actions of the Secretariat requested in the COP12 Resolutions. The annual workplan for 2016 was extracted from the triennium workplan. Both documents are presented to SC52 under agenda item 12 (Documents SC52-07 and SC52-08). All staff members have developed their individual workplans for 2016 upon these activities and tasks, grouped under Ramsar's 4 Strategic goals. In addition, the Secretariat is focusing on the Executive Team's priorities, also included in the 2016 workplan.

5. As specifically requested in Resolution XII.3 paras. 44 and 46), and as discussed in SC51, the Secretariat facilitated the selection of regional representatives and also participated in the cooperation workshop led by CBD in February 2016, together with all the other biodiversity-related Conventions (CITES, CMS, IPPC, World Heritage Convention, IPGRFA). The Ramsar representatives according to the CBD regions were as follows: for Africa, Kenya; for Asia and the Pacific, Nepal; for GRULAC, Colombia; for CEE, Armenia; for WEOG, the USA. The workshop concluded that there was no need for new tools for cooperation, but to strengthen existing tools (such as InforMEA), and in particular to focus upon strengthening capacity-building efforts jointly at various levels. In terms of indicators it was found that there was a growing coherence of effort under the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Biodiversity targets, with SDG indicators soon to be finalized (in the meeting of the UNSC in Mexico, March 2016).
6. Within the Secretariat, an internal Management Team has been set up and approved by the Executive Team, consisting of the Acting Secretary General, the four Senior Regional Advisers, the Head of Communications and the Executive Assistant. The Management Team meets monthly and focuses upon implementing the Action Plan based upon the Executive Team's priorities. The points of the Action Plan (as given in 3 above) will each be taken in turn.
7. **COP13 MOU.** For COP13 planning purposes, the ASG and the SRA for Asia-Oceania visited Dubai to meet the Undersecretary and the national COP13 Organizing Committee, and to view the proposed venue and the accommodation available. The MOU for COP13 is under active discussion between the Secretariat and the United Arab Emirates, and has been revised with an annex including the actual costs of COP12. A COP13 task force has been formed within the Secretariat to help the COP13 Coordinator (the SRA for Asia-Oceania) manage the preparations.
8. **Other MOUs.** The MOUs with the Nagao Foundation and with UNEP (both presented to SC51) have been revised and are with the respective partners for comment. As set out in Decision SC51-20, "the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to pursue renewal of the agreement with Stetson University College of Law and other necessary renewal processes." Accordingly, other MOUs that have been renewed and signed include the MOU with Stetson University; the "interface arrangements" with OCHA; the MOU with Danone-Evian; and the MOU with Star Alliance (as set out in Document SC 52-16 Rev.1).
9. **Written arrangements for the Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia (RRC-EA).** A bilateral agreement between the RRC-EA and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat was signed on 15 December 2015. The full text is appended to Document SC52-16 Rev.1. This bilateral agreement was agreed by all participating Contracting Parties in East and South-east Asia. It is not an MOU, but a renewal of the existing arrangements under which the RRC-EA was set up in 2010 under the Operational Guidelines 2009-2012. The agreement was defined in accordance with paragraph 6 of the "Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands" approved by Decision SC46-28 (2013) which states that: "The complementary roles of the coordinating mechanisms of Regional Initiatives and the Ramsar Secretariat, including their respective responsibilities, may be defined in written arrangements, if agreed by all participating Contracting Parties." Meanwhile, the arrangements for hosting of the Centre were addressed through a tripartite agreement between the Steering Committee of the RRC-EA, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, and the Mayor of Suncheon City on 31 December 2015, without the involvement of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.
10. **Budget audit.** The Ramsar Convention Secretariat will have the usual audit of its finances carried out by external auditors PriceWaterhouseCoopers, in April 2016. Currently the Secretariat is also undergoing an inhouse audit, carried out by the IUCN Oversight Unit. This is a standard

procedure carried out each time the head of a unit leaves within IUCN. In addition, the budget is under continuous review to ensure that any activity or expenditure is closely linked with an item in the workplan, and hence that the budget aligns with the priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan, the COP12 Resolutions and the Executive Team's priorities. A full report on the status of the core and non-core budget for 2015 is covered in Document SC52-18.

11. **SC52 preparations.** Preparations for SC52 are under way with the rooms booked, contracts prepared for the interpreters and the rapporteur, and all documents prepared, ensuring that format and quality are in line with other international conventions. The English version of the documents is being posted online on 11 March 2016, i.e. 3 months before the meeting itself which is taking place 13-17 June 2016. The French and Spanish versions are posted the following week to give the translation team time to do its work. The draft SC52 agenda and programme, and the list of documents, were approved by the Executive Team prior to posting, and this included efforts to identify potential overlaps between members of SC Working Groups and Sub-Groups, and revising the scheduling of these groups in order to avoid clashes. A process for Parties' review of SC documents was submitted for the consideration of the Executive Team, and following substantial revision has now been submitted to the Working Group on Improving Management Instruments.
12. **Implementation of working webpage and RSIS.** The structure of the new website now contains all items from the old website. The library menu and search function have been restructured and optimized, based on feedback from Parties and SRAs. A search engine expert has advised on 'optimising' search performance at no extra cost. The format of hyperlinks has been altered, making them more visible within web pages. Sort titles have been added to library documents for 549 diplomatic notes, over 500 resolutions, over 600 COP and SC documents in order to facilitate the search for documents.
13. **Implementation of working webpage and RSIS (continued).** World Wetlands Day materials from 2001-2014 have been added (over 800 items). Broken links have been fixed. Resources from the Wise Use library have been uploaded. Over 1,300 news items have been imported from the old website. About 100 STRP documents have been added to the library, and STRP integration is ongoing. The Ramsar Culture Network has been integrated. Altogether 11 additional webpages have been added, in all 3 languages. Further actions on the Ramsar website are ongoing, and a user satisfaction survey will be conducted to test the improvement in the website.
14. **Implementation of working webpage and RSIS (continued).** On the RSIS, the priority actions have been to input information not transferred in the migration from the previous platform, to add missing maps, and to highlight transboundary sites. Of the 479 missing maps, all the existing paper maps of sufficient quality (391) have been scanned into the system, having found an oversized scanning unit for the very large paper maps. Work is ongoing with the SRAs and Assistants to obtain missing maps (27) or to revise poor quality maps (61). In order to facilitate the site update process by the Parties, three training videos are being developed, featuring real time examples of RSIS usage. Transboundary Ramsar sites have been highlighted both on the RSIS and the Ramsar home website and search function. For the missing site information that was not transferred in the migration from the previous platform (including species lists), Parties are currently being contacted to ask whether the Secretariat may input the data from the existing Ramsar Information Sheets where the data is located. This data will have to be transferred into the RSIS manually, and the proposal is to train students to do this work over the summer. This is not an update, and all data will need to be double-checked before uploading.

15. **Review of consultancies.** All contracts (current and future) have been reviewed and the contract format itself has been revised with advice from IUCN. IUCN procurement training sessions have been attended by the majority of Ramsar staff, and the remaining staff will attend a training session later in March 2016. Annex 2 shows a table with consultancies as at 31 December 2015, updating the previous table in document SC51-18 Annex 4. All previous consultancy contracts are now closed with the exception of two open projects, both paid for with non-core funds. The first open contract is for supporting three ongoing wetland restoration projects, under an agreement with NORAD, and the second is for supporting the Ramsar Culture Network, under an agreement with the MAVVA Foundation. So far in 2016, new consultancy contracts have been drawn up with interpreters for SC52, with the rapporteur for SC52, with a layout designer for publishing the updated Ramsar Convention Manual and the 4th Strategic Plan (all with core funding) and with two translators for translating essential documents into Russian (non-core funding).
16. **Review of Resource Mobilization.** The responsibilities of the former Partnership Coordinator were reallocated among staff members, pending the recruitment of a new staff member in this position. The expired Danone and Star Alliance agreements were both revitalised, with visits undertaken to Paris (for Danone) and to Frankfurt (for Star Alliance), and both agreements have now been renewed for a further 12 months. A review of resource mobilization from all sources has also been undertaken, especially as it relates to fund-raising. This information is provided in Document SC52-20. The document shows that a total amount of CHF 560,500 in non-core funding has been raised so far for activities in 2016, in order to support RAMs, STRP tasks, Russian translation, small grants (funded bilaterally) and InforMEA integration. The Secretariat has also been supporting Parties and Ramsar Regional Initiatives in putting together large project proposals for funding, to a total amount of USD 28,467,000 in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The project proposals are to IKI, GEF and the JRS Biodiversity Foundation and have been submitted. There are further project proposals to GEF and other sources which are currently being drafted.
17. **Evaluation of COP12.** The COP12 briefing report was finalized. The full COP12 proceedings including all presentations and documents will shortly be published on a separate webpage in all 3 languages, and a flashdrive containing the COP12 proceedings can be requested from the Secretariat. A Secretariat workshop was held on 15 December 2016 on the topic of COP processes, with very useful input from a senior CITES staff member on how CITES COPs are organized. The Ramsar COP Manual was revised with the input of all staff, and was published electronically on 19 February 2016.
18. The following Diplomatic Notes have been issued to all Parties by the Secretariat so far in 2016 :
 - Diplomatic Note 2016/1 : *Annual Contributions 2016* (20 January 2016)
 - Diplomatic Note 2016/2 : *Report and decisions of the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee* (16 February 2016)
 - Diplomatic Note 2016/3 : *Secretary General of the Convention : Vacancy Announcement* (22 February 2016)
 - Diplomatic Note 2016/4 : *Invitation to join the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives* (23 February 2016)
19. Travel reports : Details of all missions of senior staff members with dates and the outcomes of the missions are provided in Annex 3, for December 2015 - February 2016. All detailed travel reports on these missions are available on request, and are archived within the Secretariat.

Annex 1

Interim Arrangements for Secretariat Administration

The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) is appointed Acting Secretary General and is provided with enhanced support and supervision in this caretaker role.

The key elements of that support and supervision are:

1) Organization/Administration

- Secretariat structure remains as is and the DSG will also continue to perform the duties of DSG;
- DSG can be appointed for up to a year (the period should be shorter than this)
- DSG receives an appropriate allowance consistent with IUCN policy;
- DSG will have those duties and responsibilities of the SG position which are consistent with a caretaker regime (for example this would mean no significant changes to structure and policy nor extensive international travel). The exact nature of this arrangement will be determined by the Executive Team in consultation with the IUCN.
- DSG will be formally evaluated at an appropriate time.
- DSG may apply for the vacant SG post but she will be provided with unequivocal advice that acting in the SG position will not result in preferential treatment in that recruitment process
- Consistent with established IUCN practice, responsibilities of the DSG position may be assigned (in consultation with the Executive Team) to other Secretariat staff as appropriate and necessary. Under these circumstances allowances will be paid consistent with IUCN policy;
- The DSG will be asked to develop a strategy (for review and endorsement by the Executive Team) to foster and enhance an improved culture of collaboration and performance by Secretariat staff. This strategy to incorporate an unequivocal focus on serving Contracting Parties' needs and also address critical training needs of the staff (subject to budget availability).
- DSG will review the Secretariat's work programme and, in consultation with the Executive Team, determine critical priorities to be undertaken by the Secretariat for the period of her acting role. Those priorities will include (but are not limited to):
 - a. MOU for the COP13 (and other MOUs deemed appropriate by the Executive Team);
 - b. An audit of the Budget to ensure it properly aligns to priorities;
 - c. Preparations for SC52 in 2016;
 - d. Complete implementation of working webpage and RSIS;
 - e. Review consultancies and rationalize where possible;
 - f. Review resource mobilization, especially as it relates to fund-raising, to ensure the capture of work undertaken already so that an incoming SG is in a position to reinvigorate this program. This review should be undertaken in conjunction with the Resource Mobilization Working Group;
 - g. Evaluation of COP12.

2) Executive Team Supervision and Support*

- Executive Team (ET) will consider assigning specific responsibilities for supervision amongst its members to complement the Team's existing supervision role
- ET will work actively with DSG in initial period to facilitate and oversight priority setting and allocation of staff resources
- ET will determine optimal management and co-ordination arrangements to improve communication with and oversight of DSG (eg rather than individual responses to requests from DSG, ET will consider as a group with agreed decisions communicated via Chair)
- ET will utilise videoconferences, teleconferences and other means for its own discussions and for regular, formal contact with the DSG and the Secretariat. The Permanent Observer from Switzerland will assist through local engagement where possible;
- ET will have a concurrence role for all staff appointments and terminations as well as Secretariat travel
- ET members will consider augmentations of support and resourcing arrangements within their own agencies for the interim period
- ET will actively engage with former ET for advice and assistance

* Noting that these proposals reflect a major expansion of the duties of the Executive Team (with consequential resource implications) and further noting that this expanded role will not persist once a new SG is appointed. The long-term expectation is for the Ramsar Secretariat to function more independently in a way consistent with the best practice of other conventions.

Annex 2

Table of Consultancy Contracts as at 31 December 2015

Consultant	Contract Amount CHF	Description	Core/Non-core Funds	Source of funds	Open / Closed
Cadmus, Rob	43,600	NORAD Project, Project Management	Non-core	NORAD	Open
DJ Environmental (T.Jones)	3,600	Convention Manual Prep., 7th edition	Core	Core	Closed
Persse, Emily	7,000	Ramsar Collection, Uruguay	Non-core	Development Budget	Closed
Reardon, Vince	6,475	Wetland and sustainable livelihoods	Non-core	Danone	Closed
Lyratzaki, Irini	1,000	Analysis, Ramsar culture member prospects	Non-core	MAVA	Closed
Papayannis, Thymio	2,700	Project Concept, cultural practices	Non-core	MAVA	Closed
Yacot, Analia	6,133	360 degree feedback	Core	Core	Closed
Casallas, Sara	19,621	COP12 Support	Core	SC47 Decision: 2013 surplus	Closed
Pritchard, David	4,800	RAM Site 802 Norway	Non-core	Ramsar Advisory Mission funded by Norway	Closed
Persse, Emily	7,000	COP12 Communications Support	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Yacot, Analia	7,239	360 degree feedback	Core	Core	Closed
Byrnes, Wendy	7,750	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Valdovinos, Juan Carlos	6,975	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Bennett Baxter, Ana	5,425	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Fabre, H�el�ene	4,550	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Desruisseaux, Ginette	3,250	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Milev, Christiane	5,850	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Devitre, Dani�ele	7,750	COP12 Translation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Huntington, Veronica	4,000	Temporary Communications Support	Core	Core	Closed

Consultant	Contract Amount CHF	Description	Core/Non-core Funds	Source of funds	Open / Closed
Huntington, Veronica	6,000	Temporary Communications Support	Core	Core	Closed
Jenkins, Martin	8,250	COP12 Rapporteur	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Rutherford, Catherine	7,500	COP12 Rapporteur	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Peck, Dwight	5,500	COP12 Documentation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Pritchard, David	32,500	Celebrating Culture and Wetlands	Non-core	MAVA (Original contract closed, an extension until end of March 2018 (as per MAVA agreement) was signed February 2016)	Open
Cadmus, Rob	26,738	Natural Infrastructure project manager	Non-core	NORAD	Closed
Huntington, Veronica	9,000	COP12 Communications Support	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Waite, Charlie	7,000	Landscape Photographer WWD 2015, Awards, photos etc.	Non-core	Development Budget	Closed
WCMC	4,000	Wetland Extent Index	Core	STRP Implementation	Closed
Fry, Eve	15,000	Preparation of Water/Wetlands events	Non-core	Development Budget	Closed
Persse, Emily	15,000	Events Coordinator (WWD)	Non-core	Development budget	Closed
Persse, Emily	5,000	Temporary Communications Support	Core	Core	Closed
Tim Jones	5,600	SC 48 Rapporteur	Core	Core	Closed
RM Wetlands	4,000	Briefing note - ecosystem services	Core	STRP Implementation	Closed
RM Wetlands	3,200	STRP-preparation of paper on REDD Plus	Core	STRP Implementation	Closed
Interpreters (12)	135,000	COP12 Interpretation	Non-core	COP12 budget MOU	Closed
Interpreters (6)	27,000	SC48 Interpretation	Core	Core	Closed
CISDL	90,000	Legal services: RoP, ICJ, COP12, IUCN, contracts, MOUs etc	Core	Core	Closed
Total	561,007				

Annex 3

Table of Senior Staff Travel

Dates of travel	Location and name of conference/meeting	Motivation	Cost to Ramsar
Ania Grobicki, Acting Secretary General			
3-4 December 2015	Paris, COP21	Meeting with Bernard Giraud to discuss the renewal of the Danone Agreement: this was extremely urgent as the 5-year agreement with Danone expired in December 2015. COP21 : Speaker at panel on “Adaptation in Deltas”; meeting of “Paris Pact” signatories on water and climate; meetings with representatives of Contracting Parties, IOPs and other high level representatives.	CHF 1,568.64
10-11 December 2015	Paris, COP21	Opening speech of African session at the Climate Generation Pavilion.	CHF 588.90
13 January 2016	Frankfurt, Germany	Day trip to meet with Star Alliance CEO Mark Schwab, to discuss renewal and expansion of agreement	CHF 54.— (flights covered by Star Alliance)
17-21 January 2016	Dubai and Abu Dhabi	Meeting with high-level officials of the UAE in Dubai for COP 13 preparations; and participation in International Water Summit, Abu Dhabi (speaker in panel on <i>Water adaptation strategies to combat climate change and natural disasters</i>)	CHF 1,318.78
01-02 February 2016	Tehran and Isfahan, Iran	Invitation from Iran to meet with the Vice President, Dr Ebtekar, the UNDP Res.Rep. and the new director of the RRC-CWA; attending WWD 2016 celebration in Isfahan with the Governor General of Isfahan Province; visiting Gavkhouni wetland	CHF 295.70 (flights covered by Iran)
10-11 February 2016	Paris	Participate in MedWet/Com12 governance meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative and give closing speech	CHF 481

Camilla Chalmers, Head of Communications			
13.01.16	Frankfurt Star Alliance	2016 MOU agreement and meeting CEO Mark Schwab	CHF 42.60 (flights covered by Star Alliance)
15.01.16	Evian Pre Curieux Meeting	Kick off meeting with all stakeholders in project to agree strategy and funding lead by Evian Mayor	CHF 114.16
01.02.16	Iran WWD 2016	Invitation from Iran to attend WWD and facilitate a CEPA workshop at Lake Urmia	CHF 295.70 (flights covered by Iran)
Paul Ouedraogo, Senior Advisor, Africa			
3 to 11 December 2015	UNFCCC COP21 Paris	Hold 3 Side Events on behalf of the Ramsar Convention Bilateral meeting with CPs and potential donors	CHF 2407.5
25.01 to 3.02.2016	2016 WWD in Burkina Faso; Certificate on Wetland Local Governance	Ramsar is assisting University of Ouagadougou to implement a Certificate on Wetland Local Governance.	CHF 400
7 to 10/02/2016	MedWet/Com 12	Assist Northern Africa CPs for their inputs within meeting documents Advise Northern Africa CPs to carry out actions on updating their Ramar Site RIS (107 RIS to be updated)	CHF 432,1 Euros 330 to be reimbursed to MedWet
Maria Rivera, Senior Advisor – Americas			
7-10 December 2015	Trinidad & Tobago Country visit	Country visit to discuss with AA implementation and attendance to the 50th Anniversary of the Pointe-a- Pierre Wildfowl Trust.	CHF 2,644
Lew Young, Senior Advisor, Asia-Oceania			
Jan 15-18	Dubai (UAE)	COP13 preparation: First meeting in Dubai to discuss preparations for COP13, e.g. visit the proposed venue and hotel, make progress with the MoU etc.	CHF 1,300
Jan 19-22	Cambridge (UK)	First meeting of the IUCN Task Force on “other effective area-	CHF 400

		based conservation measures” (OECMs): The aims was to help frame the core questions and areas for further consideration prior to providing guidance to CBD about the interpretation and application of OECMs. People have stressed the importance of OECMs to the Ramsar Convention as Ramsar Sites do not always meet the IUCN definition of a protected area.	
Jan 30 to Feb 5	Pokhara (Nepal)	WWD 2016 celebrations: Celebration of the designation of the Lake-Cluster of Pokhara Valley Ramsar Site and meeting with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) concerning cooperation on wetlands in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region.	CHF 1,300
Tobias Salathe, Senior Advisor, Europe			
1-2 Dec 2015	Paris, COP21	Participate in 2 peatland side-events	CHF 795
1-3 Feb 2016	Brest, France	Participate in French national launch of WWD	CHF 691
7-12 Feb 2016	Paris	Participate in MedWet/Com12 governing meeting of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative	CHF 931