

Roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the draft resolution in the present document to be forwarded for consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Draft Resolution XIII.XX

The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

1. RECOGNIZING the value of keeping under periodic review the responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee so as to ensure that the work of the Standing Committee continues to be delivered in as effective and cost-efficient a manner as possible;
2. NOTING that Resolution XII.4 on *The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Ramsar Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention* is out of date and that a number of the tasks specified have already been implemented;
3. RECALLING that in Resolution IX.24 (2005), on *Improving management of the Ramsar Convention*, the Conference of the Parties established a Management Working Group reporting to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties;
4. AWARE that the Standing Committee's oversight of the Secretariat is conducted on its behalf between meetings of the Standing Committee by its Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance) with the Secretary General;
5. EXPRESSING APPRECIATION to the members of the Executive Team and the Management Working Group for their work;
6. RECOGNIZING that inconsistencies and contradictions between resolutions and decisions can result in confusion and a lack of clarity that may create inefficiencies in the implementation of the Convention or inadvertently adversely impact the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat, and that implementation of the Convention can be improved by retiring resolutions and decisions and parts thereof that are outdated or contradictory; and {Text provided by the Facilitation Working Group}
7. NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the steady improvement in performance, management, and optimization of resources by the Secretariat team over the past triennium and the interest by Contracting Parties in reestablishing normalized levels of oversight while maintaining

accountability between the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat; [Text provided by the Facilitation Working Group]

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. EXPRESSES its gratitude to the outgoing Chair and members of the Standing Committee for their support and willingness to provide additional oversight over the activities and the implementation of the Convention during the triennium 2015-2018; {Text provided by the Facilitation Working Group}}
9. FURTHER EXPRESSES its gratitude to the Contracting Parties that will serve as the Chair and members of the Standing Committee following the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, for their willingness to take on the responsibility to govern the activities and the implementation of the Convention for the coming triennium;
10. ALSO EXPRESSES its satisfaction with improvements made by the Secretariat in performance, management, and optimization of resources and its full support for the efforts of the Secretary General in this regard, and DECIDES to re-establish normalized levels of oversight by the Parties while maintaining accountability between the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat; {Text provided by the Facilitation Working Group}
11. ADOPTS the text in Annexes 1-4, based upon amendments that update Resolution XII.4 (2015) on *The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Ramsar Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention*; and
12. CONFIRMS that this updated text and its annexes supersede those adopted as Resolution XII.4, which is replaced by the present Resolution. {Text provided by the Facilitation Working Group}

Annex 1

The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention

1. Considering that it is useful for the effective functioning of the Ramsar Convention that Contracting Parties should have a clear process for the operation of its Standing Committee, in Resolution VII.1 (1999) the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) adopted guidelines on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and the regional categorization of countries under the Convention. In Resolution XII.4 (2012), the Parties amended that text and the list of countries and Contracting Parties assigned to each of the six Ramsar regions in order to bring them up to date.
2. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will have the following regional groups:
 - Africa
 - Asia
 - Europe
 - Latin America and the Caribbean
 - North America
 - Oceania
3. Contracting Parties and States that are eligible to accede to the Convention are assigned to the above regional groups, but Contracting Parties that are geographically near to the boundaries of the allocated region, as given in Annex 2, may, at their own request, participate in the activities of a neighbouring alternative regional group, while remaining a member of their allocated geographical regional group, upon formal notification of this intent to the COP.¹
4. The composition of the Standing Committee will be determined by means of a proportional system, by which each regional group listed in paragraph 2 above will be represented by voting members in the Standing Committee according to the following criteria:
 - a. one representative for regional groups with 1 to 12 Contracting Parties;
 - b. two representatives for regional groups with 13 to 24 Contracting Parties;
 - c. three representatives for regional groups with 25 to 36 Contracting Parties;
 - d. four representatives for regional groups with 37 to 48 Contracting Parties; and
 - e. five representatives for regional groups with 49 to 60 Contracting Parties.
5. Each region may appoint an Alternate Member for each appointed Member with full power to represent the region, if the representative member is unable to participate in a meeting of the Standing Committee.
6. The host countries of the previous and next meetings of the COP are also voting members of the Standing Committee.

¹ See resolution X1.19. "Participate" is defined in this context as different from membership within the alternative region. Participation confers to the state the right to be present in meetings, to speak, to exchange information, to submit reports, to cooperate on a scientific and practical level, and to contribute to joint projects. It does not include the right to be a representative of this alternative region nor to participate in the nomination of its representative(s). It does not confer the right to vote within the alternative region.

7. The regional representatives and their alternate Party representatives will be elected by the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the basis of nominations received from the regional groups established in paragraph 2 above. Initial consideration of nominations by regional groups will be undertaken at any intersessional regional COP preparatory meetings that take place, and nominations will be finalized by regional groups in their regional meetings at the COP venue immediately prior to the opening of the COP, so that appointments of the new members of the Standing Committee can be made as early as possible in the COP proceedings, thus permitting the new members of the Committee to participate as observers in Conference Bureau meetings during the COP.
8. The terms of office of the regional representatives will commence at the close of the meeting of the COP at which they have been elected and will expire at the close of the next ordinary meeting of the COP, and each Contracting Party may serve on the Standing Committee for a maximum of two consecutive terms.
9. Contracting Parties that are voting members of the Standing Committee will convey to the Secretariat, through their diplomatic channels, the name(s) of the officer(s) in the designated national Ramsar Administrative Authority who act as their delegates on the Standing Committee, as well as the names of their substitutes, should they be needed.
10. The Contracting Party acting as host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat will continue to have the status of permanent observer in the Standing Committee. If the host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat stands for, and is elected as, a member of the Standing Committee representing its regional group, it will have voting status for that triennium in lieu of its permanent observer status.
11. The Secretariat will continue to notify all Contracting Parties of the date and agenda of meetings of the Standing Committee at least three months in advance of each meeting, so that they may, as appropriate, make arrangements to be represented at the meeting as observers.
12. Countries that are not Contracting Parties but that have expressed an interest in acceding to the Convention may also be admitted as observers at meetings of the Standing Committee.
13. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) will be invited as an observer to Standing Committee meetings, as well as other experts and/or institutions that the Standing Committee may deem appropriate for assisting in its consideration of particular agenda items.
14. International organizations that are official International Organization Partners in the work of the Convention will be invited to participate as observers in meetings of the Standing Committee.
15. If an extraordinary meeting of the COP is held between two ordinary meetings, the host country may participate as an observer in the work of the Committee on matters related to the organization of the meeting, provided that the country in question is not already present in the Committee as a member or permanent observer.
16. The Contracting Parties in regional groups with one representative in the Standing Committee will use a rotation system for the nomination of their regional representative. In regional groups with two or more representatives the selection will be made in such a manner as to achieve a balance in relation to biogeographical, geopolitical, and cultural considerations.

17. At its first meeting immediately after the close of a COP, the Standing Committee will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the members and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance established by Resolution VI.17 (1996).
18. The Standing Committee will normally meet once each year, normally at the seat of the Convention Secretariat, according to the indicative schedule provided as Annex 4 to this Resolution. Further meetings of the Subgroup on COP and the Subgroup on Finance may be envisaged during the year before COP, if required and if sufficient funds are available, in order to ensure the timely and efficient preparation of the COP. The costs of participation of Committee members eligible for sponsorship will be borne by the Convention.
19. Within the policies agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee will be 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 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.

20. The tasks of the Regional Representatives elected to serve in the Standing Committee are contained in Annex 3 of this document.
21. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, shall take into consideration, within available resources, the need for interpretation at its subgroup meetings when it is requested by its members.
22. The Contracting Parties and the Secretariat will endeavour to secure additional voluntary funding to enable simultaneous interpretation at meetings of the Subgroup on Finance and the Subgroup on COP.
23. 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 Conference.

Annex 2

Allocation of Contracting Parties and non-party States to the six regional groups

NOTE: Names of countries in capital and bold letters denote Contracting Parties to the Convention at the time of approval of this Resolution.

AFRICA:

ALGERIA

Angola

BENIN

BOTSWANA

BURKINA FASO

BURUNDI

CAMEROON

CABO VERDE

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CHAD

COMOROS

CONGO

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

DJIBOUTI

EGYPT

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Eritrea

Ethiopia

GABON

GAMBIA

GHANA

GUINEA

GUINEA-BISSAU

KENYA

LESOTHO

LIBERIA

MADAGASCAR

MALAWI

MALI

MAURITANIA

MAURITIUS

MOROCCO

MOZAMBIQUE

NAMIBIA

NIGER

NIGERIA

RWANDA

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

SENEGAL

SEYCHELLES

SIERRA LEONE

Somalia

SOUTH AFRICA

STATE OF LIBYA

SUDAN

SOUTH SUDAN

SWAZILAND

TOGO

TUNISIA

UGANDA

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

ZIMBABWE

ASIA:

Afghanistan

BAHRAIN

BANGLADESH

BHUTAN

Brunei Darussalam

CAMBODIA

CHINA

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

INDIA

INDONESIA

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

IRAQ

JAPAN

JORDAN

KAZAKHSTAN

KUWAIT

KYRGYZSTAN

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

LEBANON

MALAYSIA

Maldives

MONGOLIA

MYANMAR

NEPAL

OMAN

PAKISTAN

PHILIPPINES

Qatar

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Saudi Arabia

Singapore

SRI LANKA

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

TAJIKISTAN

THAILAND

TURKMENISTAN

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

UZBEKISTAN

VIET NAM

YEMEN

EUROPE:

**ALBANIA
ANDORRA
ARMENIA
AUSTRIA
AZERBAIJAN
BELARUS
BELGIUM
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BULGARIA
CROATIA
CYPRUS
CZECH REPUBLIC
DENMARK
ESTONIA
FINLAND
FRANCE
GEORGIA
GERMANY
GREECE
Holy See
HUNGARY
ICELAND
IRELAND
ISRAEL
ITALY
LATVIA**

**LIECHTENSTEIN
LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG
MALTA
MONACO
MONTENEGRO
NETHERLANDS
NORWAY
POLAND
PORTUGAL
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
ROMANIA
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
San Marino
SERBIA
SLOVAK REPUBLIC
SLOVENIA
SPAIN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA
TURKEY
UKRAINE
UNITED KINGDOM**

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

ARGENTINA

BAHAMAS

BARBADOS

BELIZE

BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)

BRAZIL

CHILE

COLOMBIA

COSTA RICA

CUBA

Dominica

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ECUADOR

EL SALVADOR

GRENADA

GUATEMALA

Guyana

Haiti

HONDURAS

JAMAICA

NICARAGUA

PANAMA

PARAGUAY

PERU

Saint Kitts and Nevis

SAINT LUCIA

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

SURINAME

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

URUGUAY

VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)

NORTH AMERICA:

CANADA

MEXICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OCEANIA:

AUSTRALIA

Cook Islands

FIJI

KIRIBATI

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Micronesia (Federated States of)

Nauru

NEW ZEALAND

Niue

PALAU

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

SAMOA

Solomon Islands

Timor Leste

Tonga

Tuvalu

Vanuatu

Annex 3

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee

The Contracting Parties that are elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee will have the following tasks:

1. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives, and to make every effort to ensure that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
2. When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other Regional Representative(s).
3. 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.
4. To solicit the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
5. To advise the Secretariat in setting the agenda of regional meetings.
6. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.
7. To provide advice as requested by the Chair of the Standing Committee, the chairs of subgroups, or the Secretariat of the Convention.
8. In the regions concerned, to make efforts to encourage other countries to accede to the Convention.

Annex 4

Indicative schedule for Standing Committee intersessional meetings post-2018, and for the 2019-2021 triennium

NOTE: This schedule is predicated on 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-2018	2019-2021 triennium
First full meeting	9 months after COP13	SC57 – June/July 2019
Second full meeting	21 months after COP13	SC58 – June/July 2020
Subgroup on COP (if required)	1 year before COP14	Subgroup on COP14 (if required) – June/July 2020
Third full meeting	6 months before COP14	SC59 – January 2021
Pre-COP meeting	Immediately prior to COP14, at COP venue	SC60 – June/July 2021