

Financial and budgetary matters
Budget scenarios for 2019-2021 and
draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters

Draft Resolution 13.xx

Financial and budgetary matters

1. RECALLING the budgetary provisions established by paragraphs 5 and 6 of Article 6 of the Convention on Wetlands;
2. ACKNOWLEDGING WITH APPRECIATION the prompt payment by the majority of Contracting Parties of their contributions to the core budget of the Convention, but NOTING WITH CONCERN that a number of Parties still have significant outstanding contributions (COP13 DOC.xx);
3. NOTING WITH GRATITUDE the additional voluntary financial contributions made by many Contracting Parties including those from Africa and also the contributions made by non-governmental organizations and private companies for activities undertaken by the Secretariat;
4. RECALLING the Delegation of Authority to the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands signed by the Director General of IUCN and the Chairman of the Standing Committee on 29 January 1993 and the Supplementary Note to Delegation of Authority signed on 29 January 1993;
5. ACKNOWLEDGING WITH APPRECIATION the financial and administrative services provided to the Secretariat by IUCN, underpinned by the Services Agreement between Ramsar and IUCN, revised in 2009;
6. NOTING that Contracting Parties have been kept informed of the financial situation of the Secretariat through the audited annual financial statements for the years from 2015 to 2017 and the reports of the Standing Committee meetings from 2016 to 2018; and
7. RECOGNIZING the need to continue to strengthen financial partnerships with relevant international organizations and other entities and to explore additional funding opportunities through their existing financial mechanisms;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. APPRECIATES that, since the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in 2015, the Secretariat has managed the Convention's funds prudently, efficiently and openly;

9. EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE to the Contracting Parties that have served in the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee during the triennium 2016-2018, and in particular to Senegal, which has acted as Chair of the Subgroup;
10. DECIDES that the Terms of Reference for the Financial Administration of the Convention contained in Annex 3 to Resolution 5.2 (Kushiro, 1993) shall be applied *in toto* to the 2019-2021 cycle;
11. FURTHER DECIDES that the Subgroup on Finance will continue to operate under the aegis of the Standing Committee and with the roles and responsibilities specified in Resolution VI.17 (Brisbane, 1996), and will include one Standing Committee representative from each Ramsar region plus the immediate prior Finance Subgroup Chair, as well as any other interested Contracting Parties, bearing in mind the desirability of equitable regional participation and the need to keep the group to a manageable size, and will designate one of its members as its Chair; and NOTES that travel support for eligible Contracting Parties to attend Finance Subgroup meetings would be limited to the regional representatives of the Standing Committee;
12. NOTES that the 2019-2021 budget includes a core element funded by contributions from Contracting Parties, and that the Secretariat will seek additional non-core resources in line with the priorities identified by the Conference of the Parties in Annex 3;
13. APPROVES the core budget for the triennium 2019-2021 as attached in Annex 1, to enable the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention;
14. REQUESTS that the Secretariat continue to develop new approaches and tools to secure voluntary financial support for currently unfunded priority projects as listed in Annex 3.
15. NOTES with appreciation the alignment of the Secretariat with IUCN policies and procedures for managing non-core funding;
16. REQUESTS the Secretariat to provide to the Ramsar regional initiatives in Africa on an annual basis the available balance of the African voluntary contribution fund and INVITES those regional initiatives to submit requests to the Secretariat to access available funds using the rules of regional initiatives found in Resolution RRI;
17. [In exceptional circumstances, AUTHORIZES the Secretariat, upon request, to manage non-core funds generated by regional initiatives.]
18. AUTHORIZES the Standing Committee, with the advice of its Subgroup on Finance, to revise core budgetary allocations between budget lines as may be required in the light of significant positive or negative changes during the cycle to costs, rates of inflation, interest and tax income projected in the budget, without increasing the assessed contributions of Parties or increasing the charges paid to IUCN above a maximum of 13% of the budget;
19. RECOGNIZING benefits of flexibility in travel budget lines to deliver on the Secretariat Work Plan for the triennium and AUTHORIZES the Secretary General to transfer resources between travel budget lines. When any such transfers are made, the Subgroup on Finance will be informed and these transfers will be reported to the Standing Committee at its next meeting.

20. DECIDES that the contribution of each Contracting Party to the core budget should be in accordance with the most recent scale of assessments for the contribution of Member States to the United Nations budget as approved by the UN General Assembly, except in the case of Contracting Parties which, in applying the UN scale of assessments, would make annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention core budget of less than CHF 1,000, in which case the annual contribution is to be that amount;
21. URGES all Contracting Parties to pay their contributions promptly by 1 January of each year, or as soon thereafter as that country's budget cycle will permit;
22. URGES Contracting Parties with outstanding contributions to make a renewed effort to settle them as expeditiously as possible to enhance the financial sustainability of the Convention through contributions by all Contracting Parties; REQUESTS the Secretariat to contact Contracting Parties that have outstanding contributions in excess of three years and assist them to identify appropriate options to rectify the situation and to request a plan for making payment of contributions, and to report back at each meeting of the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties on activities taken in this regard and results achieved; and AGREES that the Standing Committee should continue to consider appropriate action concerning Parties that have neither paid their outstanding contributions nor submitted a payment plan for this purpose;
23. REQUESTS regional representatives of the Standing Committee to engage Parties from their respective regions with outstanding contributions to urge them to identify appropriate options to rectify the situation.
24. NOTES with concern the situation with voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to increase such contributions;
25. AGREES to phase out the Small Grants Fund Programme upon exhaustion of its currently available resources and EXPRESSES gratitude to the governments of Switzerland, the United States of America and to Danone, the MAVA Foundation and the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation for their voluntary contributions to non-core activities of the Convention namely, the Swiss Grant for Africa, Wetlands for the Future Fund, World Wetlands Day, Conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in wetlands and Nagao Wetland Fund, respectively;
26. REAFFIRMS the decision taken at COP11 (Resolution XI.2) that the Reserve Fund:
 - a. provides for unforeseen and unavoidable expenditures;
 - b. receives realized triennial core budget surpluses (or deficits);
 - c. should not be lower than 6% of the annual core budget of the Convention and not greater than 15%;
 - d. should be administered by the Secretary General with the approval of the Subgroup on Finance established by the Standing Committee;
27. REQUESTS the Secretariat to endeavour to maintain the Reserve Fund over the 2019-2021 triennium and to report annually to the Standing Committee on its status and to seek the concurrence of the Subgroup on Finance prior to any use of the Fund;
28. Also AUTHORIZES the Secretary General, within the rules of IUCN, to adjust the staffing levels and numbers and structure of the Secretariat found in Annex 4, provided they are within the costs indicated and taken in accordance with the 1993 delegation of authority and its supplementary note;

29. NOTES with appreciation the transparency and accountability regarding Secretariat operations that the Secretary General has fostered during the current triennium and REQUESTS as a means to further enhance these efforts that the Secretary General designate a specific portion of the Convention website where information to ensure transparency and accountability is contained including inter alia completed and accepted audit reports, financial rules and regulations, Secretary General annual reports, engagement procedures with the private sector and materials related to employee codes of conduct and professional ethics, the 1993 delegation of authority and its supplementary note, anti-fraud policies, anti-harassment policies, whistle-blower rules and protections, conflict of interest policies, gender equity and equality policies as well as any other relevant information;
30. REQUESTS the Secretariat to utilize the UN Conference on Trade and Development's list of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) when determining eligibility for sponsorship for delegate travel and to consider SIDS as eligible for support whether or not they are formally classified as such on economic grounds in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list; and
31. CONFIRMS that this Resolution and its annexes supersede and replace Resolution XII.1 (Punta del Este, 2015) and Resolution VI.17 paragraph 11a.