

Provisional Report and Decisions of the 54th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Thursday 26 April 2018

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

The **Chair** (Uruguay) called the session to order at 10.10.

119. The **Chair** requested that the draft daily reports of days 1 and 2 be amended to make it clear at the end of each agenda item that the Chair had invited the Standing Committee to indicate its agreement with the proposed conclusion or way forward.

120. The **Standing Committee** concurred with a recommendation from the Executive Team, communicated by the Chair, that the present session should conclude at 12.00 to enable working groups to continue their work.

121. The **Chair** requested that Parties and observers take the floor no more than twice on each agenda item and respect the previously agreed limits on speaking time. Specific comments and proposed amendments to draft resolutions should be submitted in writing to the Secretariat.

122. **Austria**, on behalf of the European region, reiterated the request made the previous day for a contact group to be established to consider the draft resolution contained in document Doc. SC54-21.8.

123. Following discussion, during which views were expressed by **Japan, Senegal** and **United States of America**, the **Standing Committee** endorsed a suggestion from the Chair that an informal group be established, with participation from European regional representatives, Japan, Senegal, United States of America, and other interested Parties, to find an agreed way forward. The Facilitation Working Group would also be invited to report back to a plenary session concerning the progress of its discussions on governance-related matters.

Agenda item 21. Draft resolutions submitted by Contracting Parties (continued)

21.1 Draft resolution on the rapid assessment of wetland ecosystem services (Submitted by the Republic of Korea – document Doc. SC54-21.1)

124. Statements of general support for the draft resolution were made by **Argentina, Kenya, Oman**, and the **Chair of STRP**.

125. Minor comments and proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Finland, Senegal, Switzerland, United States of America**, and **WWF** (supported by Switzerland).

126. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that the Secretariat should prepare a revised text, reflecting the amendments proposed, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

21.3 Draft resolution on conservation and management of small and micro wetlands (Submitted by China – document Doc. SC54-21.3)

127. **China** tabled two amendments to the draft resolution. These had been made in response to feedback from interested Parties.

128. Statements of general support were made by **Czech Republic, Republic of Korea** and **Oman**.

129. Specific comments and proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, China, Estonia** (on behalf of the European region), **France, Islamic Republic of Iran** and **United States of America**.

130. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat by 13.00 on 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to China; and that China should prepare a revised text for further consideration by the meeting.

21.4 Draft resolution on Ramsar Advisory Missions (Submitted by Burkina Faso – document Doc. SC54-21.4)

131. **Senegal**, speaking on behalf of Burkina Faso, briefly introduced the draft resolution.

132. Specific comments and proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria** (on behalf of the European region), **Canada, Cuba, Finland, Japan, United Kingdom** and **United States of America**.

133. The **Chair of the STRP** provided further contextual information.

134. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat by 13.00 on 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to Senegal; and that Senegal, with the support of the United Kingdom and other interested Parties, as appropriate, should prepare a revised text for further consideration by the meeting.

21.7 Draft resolution on wetlands in West Asia (Submitted by Iraq – document Doc. SC54-21.7)

135. **Iraq** made a statement on the conservation of the Mesopotamian Marshes and introduced the draft resolution.

136. Specific comments and proposed amendments were made by **Islamic Republic of Iran, Senegal** (on behalf of the African region) and **United States of America**.

137. **UNEP** presented information concerning the resolution on sand and dust storms adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2017.

138. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat by 13.00 on 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq; and that these two Parties should prepare a revised text for further consideration by the meeting.

21.9 Draft resolution on promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue carbon ecosystems (Submitted by Australia – document Doc. SC54-21.9)

139. Statements of general support were made by **Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Oman**.

140. Specific comments and proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Canada, China, Colombia, Finland, France, Senegal, United States of America, Uruguay**, the **Chair of the STRP** and **Wetlands International**.

141. **Australia** welcomed the contributions received and confirmed that it would consider the proposals made by the observer from Wetlands International.

142. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat by 13.00 on 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to Australia; and that Australia should prepare a revised text for further consideration by the meeting.

The **Chair** closed the session at 12:05.

15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

The **Chair** called the session to order at 15:05.

143. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** agreed that the meeting should deal with the remaining four draft resolutions submitted by Parties and then receive progress reports from working groups.

21.11 Draft resolution on World Wetlands Day (submitted by the United Arab Emirates – Doc. SC54-21.11)

144. A general statement of support for the draft resolution was made by **Oman**.

145. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Kenya, Islamic Republic of Iran, Senegal and United States of America**.

146. **UNEP** assured the meeting of its readiness to collaborate closely with the Convention to enhance the visibility of WWD.

147. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that the Secretariat should prepare a revised text, reflecting the amendments proposed, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

21.13 Draft resolution on promoting the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats (submitted by the Philippines – Doc. SC54-21.13)

148. **The Philippines** briefly introduced the draft resolution. A number of comments had already been received from other Parties and these would be taken into consideration.

149. Further specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were tabled by **Brazil, Canada, France, Senegal, United States of America** and the **Chair of the STRP**.

150. **The Philippines** responded to a number of the comments made.

151. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat during the afternoon of 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to The Philippines; and that The Philippines should prepare a revised text that evening for further consideration by the meeting on 27 April.

21.10 Draft resolution on the enhanced protection and management of sea turtle breeding, feeding and nursery areas and the designation of key areas as Ramsar Sites (Submitted by France and Senegal – Doc. SC54-10)

152. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments to the draft resolution, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Argentina, Australia, Colombia** (speaking on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), **India, Japan, United States of America** and **Uruguay**.

153. In response to a question from Islamic Republic of Iran, **France** confirmed that the Annex would ideally be a comprehensive list of relevant sites.

154. Confirming that it would be able to assist with updating the Annex, the **Secretariat** suggested that it might be helpful to clarify the nature of the Annex in the text of the draft resolution itself.

155. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat during the afternoon of 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to France and Senegal; and that these Parties should prepare a revised text that evening for further consideration by the meeting on 27 April.

21.16 Draft resolution on gender and wetlands (submitted by Colombia – Doc. SC54-16)

156. General statements of support were made by **Cuba** and **Uruguay**.

157. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Brazil** (also tabling a comment on behalf of **Chile**), **France** (concerning linguistic issues in the French text), **Kenya, Slovenia** (on behalf of the European region), **United States of America**, and **Wetlands International**.

158. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that proposed amendments should be sent to the Secretariat during the afternoon of 26 April; that the Secretariat should compile these submissions and forward them to Colombia; and that Colombia should prepare a revised text that evening for further consideration by the meeting on 27 April.

Progress reports from working groups

159. On behalf of Canada in its capacity as Chair of the Working Group on staffing issues, the **Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee** reported that the Working Group's report would be included in the outcomes report of SC54.
160. Brief progress reports were made by the **co-Chair of the Facilitation Working Group** (United States of America) and by **Austria** on behalf of the informal group established to consider the draft resolution in document Doc. SC54-21.8.
161. There followed extensive discussion concerning the way forward to COP13 with regard to governance matters, during which contributions were made by **Austria, Colombia, Finland, France, Kenya, Russian Federation, Senegal, Switzerland** and the **United States of America**.
162. The **Chair** and **Vice-Chair** welcomed the efforts made by Parties to seek a consensus way forward, but recognized the limited time available for achieving this at the present meeting. They suggested a possible two-stage process whereby both the draft resolution prepared by the Facilitation Working Group (Doc. SC54-9) and the draft resolution submitted by Switzerland (Doc. SC54-21.8) would be forwarded to COP13 in square brackets, but that discussions between interested Parties would continue after SC54 with a view to enabling the COP to make progress as efficiently as possible.
163. This proposal enjoyed a measure of support among some Parties, but other Parties considered that it raised significant procedural and practical challenges.
164. The **Chair** deferred further discussion until 27 April, when the Legal Adviser would be asked to provide her advice on interpretation of relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure, taking into account past precedent, concerning (a) the submission of draft resolutions by working groups and (b) the submission to COP of draft resolution texts that are square-bracketed in their entirety.

22. Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)

165. The **Chair of the STRP** briefly presented document Doc. SC54-22 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)*.
166. The **United States of America** welcomed the report, noting that the STRP had accomplished a great deal with its more focused mandate and workplan. It was particularly encouraging to see the Panel leveraging the use of social media and working with other entities such as IPBES. It would be important to ensure that regions had equitable opportunities for participating in STRP meetings.
167. **France** also welcomed the STRP's report and was convinced that whatever the outcome of deliberations on governance issues, the STRP needed to remain at the heart of the Convention.
168. In response to questions from the United States of America, the **Chair of the STRP** provided further details of (a) the communication strategy planned for the Global Wetland Outlook and (b) the availability of Policy Briefs and Briefing Notes arising from the STRP's work.

169. **Austria** paid tribute to the work of the outgoing STRP Chair, Professor Royal Gardner and led a standing ovation in acknowledgement of Professor Gardner's contribution to the Convention.

Progress reports from working groups (continued)

170. **Sweden** reported that following a meeting of the contact group established to consider the draft resolution on wetlands in polar and subpolar regions (Doc. SC54-21.14), written comments had been received from Canada, France, Japan, the United States of America, the STRP and BirdLife International. Comments raised during SC54 plenary discussion of the text on 24 April and during the European pre-COP regional meeting, would also be taken into account. Sweden undertook to prepare a revised text but indicated this would not be possible before the close of the present meeting.

171. The **Secretary General** enquired how a text that was only finalized after SC54 could be endorsed by the Standing Committee for forwarding to COP13, as was required for conformity with the Rules of Procedure.

172. The **Legal Adviser** presented her advice on relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure.

173. **Australia** indicated that it would be uncomfortable with endorsing a draft resolution that potentially raised important international legal matters without the Standing Committee having reviewed and agreed the text prior to submission.

174. The **United States of America** suggested that those parts of the draft resolution that did not enjoy consensus should be square bracketed and that Sweden could focus its consultations on agreeing how such paragraphs should be handled going forward.

175. The **Chair** invited Sweden to take up this suggestion and to provide a revised text to the Secretariat for further consideration by the Standing Committee on 27 April.

23. Draft resolution on future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021 (Doc. SC54-23)

176. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Austria** (on behalf of the European pre-COP regional meeting), **Brazil**, **Finland**, **France**, **Senegal** and **United States of America**.

177. At the invitation of the Vice-Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that the Chair of the STRP should work with the Secretariat to prepare a revised text, reflecting the amendments proposed, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

24. Draft resolution on guidance on identifying Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) for global climate change regulation as an additional argument to existing Ramsar criteria (Doc. SC54-24)

178. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Argentina**, **Austria**, **Canada**, **Colombia**, **Finland**, **France**, **Russian Federation**, **United States of America** and **Uruguay**.

179. At the invitation of the Vice-Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that the Chair of the STRP should work with the Secretariat to prepare a revised text, reflecting the amendments proposed, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

25. Draft resolution on restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity (Doc. SC54-25).

180. Specific comments and/or proposed amendments, to be sent to the Secretariat in writing, were briefly summarized by **Argentina, Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Russian Federation, Thailand** and **Uruguay**.

181. At the invitation of the Vice-Chair, the **Standing Committee** confirmed that the Chair of the STRP should work with the Secretariat to prepare a revised text, reflecting the amendments proposed, and forward this for consideration at COP13.

12. Work plan of the Secretariat for 2018 and proposed format for 2019-2021

182. The **Secretary General** briefly introduced document Doc. SC54-12 *Work plan of the Secretariat for 2018 and proposed format for 2019-2021*. This included a suggested revised structure for the work plan. Parties were invited to provide comments on both the current workplan and the suggested format for the next triennium.

183. Interventions were made by **France, Senegal** and the **United States of America**. Both France and the United States indicated that they would provide comments in writing to the Secretariat.

184. The Secretary General thanked Parties for their input and undertook to refine the 2018 work plan, in particular by seeking to make the CEPA elements more visible, and to develop further the format of the workplan for the forthcoming triennium.

185. At the invitation of the Chair, the **Standing Committee** took note of and approved the Secretariat's 2018 work plan and endorsed the proposed format of the Secretariat's work plan for the 2019-2021 triennium, subject to account being taken of the points raised by Parties.

Standing Committee Decision SC54-07: The Standing Committee took note of and approved the Secretariat's 2018 work plan and endorsed the proposed format of the Secretariat's work plan for the 2019-2021 triennium, subject to account being taken of the points raised by Parties.

Progress reports from working groups (continued)

184. The **Secretariat** reported that the groups tasked with revising the following documents had now completed their work:

- Language strategy (Doc. SC54-13)
- Small and micro wetlands (Doc. SC54-21.3)
- Culture-related matters, including the MAVA project (Doc. SC54-21.15 and Doc. SC54-11.3)
- Peace, security and biodiversity (Doc. SC54-21.2 and Doc. SC54-21.6)

Iraq had indicated that it would be submitting a revised text of the draft resolution on West Asian wetlands (Doc. SC54-21.7) by 21.00 that evening.

Work had not yet been completed on:

- Governance issues (Doc. SC54-9, Doc. SC54-10 and Doc. SC54-21.8)
- Wetlands in polar and subpolar regions (Doc. SC54.14).

The sequence for discussion on 27 April would be dependent on the availability of revised texts in all three languages, which in turn depended on timely submission of revised drafts to the Secretariat.

The **Chair** closed the session at 18:20.