

Wetland City Accreditation process

Background

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 12th meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution XII.10 on *Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention* “in order to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands and regional and international co-operation, as well as to generate sustainable socio-economic benefits for the local populations.”
3. In paragraph 11 of the Resolution, the Conference of the Parties
DECIDES to review implementation progress and financing of the framework and the voluntary accreditation system at COP13.

Implementation

4. At its 53rd meeting (SC53, May-June 2017) the Standing Committee adopted Decision SC53-14 as follows:

The Standing Committee:
 - *confirmed the composition of the Independent Advisory Committee until COP13 as set out in Resolution XII.10, with the exception that the Chair would be Tunisia and the Co-Chair would be the Republic of Korea, while UN-Habitat would serve as a member of the Committee;*
 - *welcomed the offer of RRC-EA to participate in the IAC;*
 - *agreed that the participation of the Secretary General or her designee in the IAC should be largely symbolic;*
 - *confirmed that the administrative role of the Secretariat should be minimal, limited to receiving applications and forwarding them to the IAC, without an impact on core budget funding (meaning operation of the IAC including translations of WCA applications and other relevant documents would have to be covered by external funds to be mobilised by the IAC);*
 - *noted the specific proposed amendments to document SC53-16 tabled by South Africa;*
and
 - *agreed an extension of the deadline for the submission of WCA applications until 31 October 2017.*
5. At its 54th meeting (SC54, April 2018), the Standing Committee met in closed session to consider the report of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) and the nominations for Wetland City Accreditation, contained in document SC54-28.2. The report included: a report of the procedure that was followed; a summary of the results; the names of sites recommended

for accreditation as Wetland Cities; and recommendations for improvement of the application and selection process. The Standing Committee adopted Decision SC54-14 as follows:

The Standing Committee decided that the report of the Independent Advisory Committee on Wetland City Accreditation would be taken forward for further consideration and announcement at COP13, and that the Wetland City Accreditation list would be under embargo until then.

6. During the preparations for the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, some Parties expressed to the Secretariat a number of requests. For example:
 - that the list of nominated cities should be published; and
 - that the nominated cities should be invited to COP13 for a ceremony to present certificates to their representatives.
7. Regarding the first request, the Secretariat noted that this was contrary to the decision of the Standing Committee. Regarding the second, it noted that the Resolution specifies that the certificates would be presented by the Secretary General to the Ramsar Administrative Authorities of the countries concerned. After considerable correspondence with the countries concerned and the Executive Team, it was agreed to inform the Authorities concerned that their nominations would be forwarded to the COP so that they could make arrangements for the city representatives to participate at COP13.
8. In reviewing the provisional working programme for COP13, and after consulting the Executive Team, the Secretariat has included spaces in the programme for:
 - consideration of the Standing Committee's report to the COP13, for endorsement; and of its recommendations regarding the review of implementation; and
 - presentation of the certificates of Wetland City accreditation, where the Ramsar Administrative Authorities may be accompanied by the mayors or other representatives of the cities being accredited.
9. The IAC provided an estimation of the time that its members devoted to the Wetland City Accreditation process and the Secretariat identified the activities carried out to support it. This information is included in Annex 1.

Recommendation

9. The Standing Committee is expected to report to the Conference of the Parties regarding:
 - a. the names of the cities nominated for Wetland City accreditation; and
 - b. progress in implementation of the Wetland City accreditation scheme and financing.
10. Regarding 9.a, in the absence of a written report, the report of the Standing Committee is presumably expected to be an oral report. The Standing Committee may wish to consider whether to recommend to the Conference of the Parties that this be discussed in a closed session, as was the case at SC54.
11. Regarding 9.b, and considering the report of the IAC in document SC54-28.2, and the apparent lack of clarity in Resolution XII.10 about certain aspects of the implementation of the Wetland City accreditation scheme, the Standing Committee may wish to recommend that COP13 provides further clarification.

Annex 1

Time allocated by the Independent Advisory Committee in the City Accreditation process and support provided by the Secretariat

1. Time allocated by the Independent Advisory Committee:
 - Development of assessment forms and guidance for cities and Heads of Administrative Authorities: 5 days (draft prepared by representative of UN-Habitat)
 - Review of 22 applications, recommendation on accreditation, report to Standing Committee: 24 days

2. Support provided by the Secretariat:
 - Contribution to development of assessment forms and guidance for cities and Heads of Administrative Authorities.
 - Preparations for SC52, SC53, SC54: development of plans and timelines; clarifications on process (e.g. role of UN-Habitat, role of the Secretariat); preparation of papers for Standing Committee, including reports of process, requests for guidance and options for implementation.
 - Receiving, checking submission by appropriate authority and forwarding applications to Independent Advisory Committee.
 - Preparations for COP13: clarifications on process, including exchanges with Contracting Parties and Executive Team (e.g. participation of city representatives, addition of items in COP13 agenda); organization of accreditation ceremony; and communications.
 - Preparation of accreditation certificates and communications.