

Provisional Report and Decisions of the 57th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Tuesday 25 June 2019

15:00 – 17:40 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 25. Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2018 and 2019, and establishment of the Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group

1. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.25, *2019 Update on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, noting that annual reports received from the various Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) were summarized in Annex 1 and that the full reports were available on the Ramsar website and accessible through a link in the document.
2. Participants emphasized the value of the RRIs, in particular in their ability to leverage funding and their potential role in capacity building.
3. The Secretary General drew attention to paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of the document concerning the lack of consistency in reports received from RRIs, their sometimes unclear legal status and challenges for the Secretariat in determining how to interact most appropriately with them.
4. Interventions were made by Algeria, Australia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Mexico, Uganda and the United States of America.
5. Mexico as chair of the Subgroup on Finance clarified that the Subgroup will address the allocation of funds for regional initiatives.
6. The Chair of the Standing Committee established an informal working group, comprising Algeria, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chad, Costa Rica, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Panama, Ukraine, Sweden and Togo, to address the concerns raised by the Secretary General on the need to have clear guidance on the role of the Secretariat in the Regional Initiatives and standard reports for RRIs, and report back to a later session.

Agenda item 26. Wetland City Accreditation: Guidance for the 2019-2021 triennium

7. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.26, *Wetland City Accreditation: Guidance for the 2019-2021 triennium*, noting that Resolution XII.10 on *Wetland City Accreditation of the Ramsar Convention* did not provide clear operational guidelines to the Secretariat. It drew attention to paragraph 19 of the document on the role of the Secretariat, indicating that

provision of some core budget funds had been identified as necessary for the Secretariat to fulfil its responsibilities.

8. Several participants praised the Wetland City Accreditation as a very successful venture, noting that the Accreditation ceremony at COP13 had gained the highest media profile of any event at the Meeting. They stressed the potential role of the Accreditation as a flagship for Ramsar, and stated that they considered it appropriate that some of the identified budget surplus be devoted to furthering its development.
9. Other Participants raised concerns about the potentially growing financial implications of the process, particularly if the number of cities applying for accreditation were to increase significantly. They noted that they had raised similar concerns in discussions at COP12, and had not opposed Resolution XII.10 on the understanding that its implementation would be cost-neutral to the Secretariat.
10. Interventions were made by Austria, Australia, Chad, China, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, the Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia, and Wetlands International.
11. The Chair of the Standing Committee established an informal working group, comprising Austria, Chad, China, France, Japan, Republic of Korea, South Africa and the United States of America, to elaborate on the role of the Secretariat and timeline and report back at a later session.

Agenda item 11. Final reports of the Chairs of retired working groups

12. The Secretariat introduced documents SC57 Doc.11.1, SC57 Doc.11.2, SC57 Doc.11.3, SC57 Doc.11.4, SC57 Doc.11.5 and SC57 Doc.11.6, these being the final reports of the Transition Committee, the Resource Mobilization Working Group, the Working Group on CEPA Implementation, the Facilitation Working Group, the Language Strategy Working Group and the Staffing Working Group respectively in accordance with paragraph 10 of Resolution XIII.3 on *Governance of the Convention*.
13. Interventions were made by Uruguay, Sweden and the United States of America.

Decision SC57-10: The Standing Committee took note of the final reports of the six retired working groups.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Executive Team Agenda item 12.1: Terms of reference of the Executive Team
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14. The Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee introduced document SC57 Doc.12. containing draft terms of reference for the Executive Team in accordance with paragraph 16 of Resolution XIII.4 *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention*, which had been drafted by the Executive Team.
15. Interventions were made by Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on behalf of the European Contracting Parties suggesting amendments to the draft terms of reference, and the United States of America.

16. The Chair of the Standing Committee asked all those with comments on the draft terms of reference to forward these for consideration by the Executive Team, which would produce a revised version for consideration and discussion at a later session.

Agenda item 13. Review of the Rules of Procedure
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17. The Legal Adviser to the Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.13, *Review of the Rules of Procedure*, noting that this was a work in progress.
18. Participants appreciated the work undertaken and supported its continuation, noting that the work was essentially a two-stage process, one identifying gaps and inconsistencies that needed to be addressed prior to COP14, and the other responding to other processes regarding the roles and responsibilities of subsidiary bodies of the Convention.
19. Interventions were made by Dominican Republic, France, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.
20. The Chair of the Standing Committee asked all interested Contracting Parties to send their comments and observations to the Secretariat for incorporation into a revised document to be considered at SC58.

Decision SC57-11: The Standing Committee took note of the progress in the review of the Rules of Procedure and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a revised document with the comments received, to be presented at SC58.