

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

Wednesday 26 June 2019

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

Agenda item 21.2: Follow up to COP13 and preparation of COP14 - COP14 Host and establishment of the Subgroup on COP14 (continued)

1. The Standing Committee considered the establishment of the Subgroup on COP14, comprising one representative from each of the six Ramsar regions. The Committee agreed that the remit of the Subgroup could be extended to include the development of initial ideas for the 50th anniversary of the Convention in 2021, and that a larger Subgroup composition might support this.

Decision SC57-15: The Standing Committee established the Subgroup on COP14, chaired by China and also comprising Austria, Armenia, Algeria, Australia, Costa Rica, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, to oversee the COP14 planning process and to develop ideas regarding the celebration of the Convention's 50th anniversary in 2021, seeking the support of other Contracting Parties as required.

Agenda item 14: Review of all previous Resolutions and decisions

2. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.14, representing a preliminary response to paragraphs 24 and 25 of Resolution XIII.4 on *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention*.
3. Participants recognized the scale of the task faced by the Secretariat in attempting to review all previous Resolutions and decisions, and agreed that any comprehensive work to classify them and identify protocols for their eventual retirement or consolidation would require financial resources. It was suggested that, as a first step, a preliminary classification of existing Resolutions into major thematic areas could be undertaken by the Secretariat. This would serve as a basis for the selection of priority areas for further action, the identification of which would take into account the priorities identified under Agenda item 8 on *Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention*.
4. The importance of building on earlier work within the Convention and by other MEAs and organizations was emphasized.

5. Interventions were made by Australia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

Decision SC57-16: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to carry out a preliminary grouping of existing Resolutions into major thematic areas, identifying possible priority areas for further action in line with the prioritization of urgent challenges under Agenda item 8, to submit intersessionally to a group comprising the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States of America and the Chair of the STRP for their consideration, along with advice on the capacity that would be needed to take the process further.

Agenda item 10: Report of the Effectiveness Working Group and approval of the terms of reference of the Group

6. The United Kingdom presented an update of the Group's activities to date, drawing attention to the Group's terms of reference proposed in document SC57 Com.1 and noting that a consultant had been appointed. The Group had appointed the United Kingdom and Zambia as Co-Chairs.

Decision SC57-17: The Standing Committee approved the terms of reference of the Effectiveness Working Group in document SC57 Com.1 and took note of the appointment of the United Kingdom and Zambia as Co-Chairs of the Group.

Agenda item 16: Work plan of the Secretariat for 2019-2021

7. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.16, *Workplan for the Secretariat for 2019-2021*, noting the integration of the the annual plan for 2019, the triennial plan for 2019-2021 and the CEPA Action Plan, in line with Standing Committee Decision SC53-07.
8. Interventions were made by Australia, France and the United States of America, commending the plan's content and structure while drawing attention to some minor editorial amendments and underlining the importance they attached to actions towards gender parity.

Decision SC57-18: The Standing Committee approved the Workplan for the Secretariat for 2019-2021, with the addition of minor editorial amendments to be submitted by Parties to the Secretariat.

Agenda item 15.1: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA)
- Establishment of the CEPA Oversight Panel

9. The Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel provided an update on work carried out by the newly constituted Panel, noting that its mandate was not very clear. She noted that a first task might be a small survey of Contracting Parties to identify their successful CEPA-related activities and outstanding needs. It was proposed to hold a teleconference of the Panel in September.

Agenda item 15.2: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA)
- Report of the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day

10. The Secretariat provided an update on World Wetlands Day 2019, the theme of which had been "wetlands and climate change", noting that nearly 1,500 events in 108 countries had been registered, with nearly 500 million people reached through social media..

11. Participants congratulated the Contracting Parties (and notably France) which had been successful in holding a large number of events and commended the materials produced by the Secretariat.
12. Interventions were made by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Agenda item 15.3: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) - Implementation of Resolution XIII.1 on World Wetlands Day (UN request)

13. The United Arab Emirates provided an oral update on efforts to have 2 February designated as World Wetlands Day by the UN General Assembly. They had, with Secretariat support, been preparing a submission including draft resolution text, to be submitted for consideration by the next session of the General Assembly before the 25 July 2019 deadline. Contracting Parties were encouraged to engage their permanent missions in support of the initiative, and invited to consider co-sponsoring the draft resolution.

14. Interventions were made by France, Uganda, and the United States of America.

Decision SC57-19: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to draft talking points and share them with Contracting Parties to enable consistent messaging in support of the initiative.

Agenda item 19: Ramsar Convention Resource Mobilization Work Plan

15. The Secretariat introduced Document SC57 Doc.19, noting that a database of potential funding organizations was now available on the Ramsar website¹.
16. Australia and the United States of America thanked the Secretariat for its work and stressed the importance of support to build the resource mobilization capacities of Contracting Parties.

Decision SC57-20: The Standing Committee took note of the Ramsar Convention Resource Mobilization Work Plan.

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

17. The Republic of Korea reported that the contact group had met on 26 June, and provided an update of its work on the timeline for the process in the 2019-2021 triennium . He encouraged Contracting Parties from each region to nominate candidates to serve on the Independent Advisory Committee for the 2019-2021 triennium, so that the composition of the Group could be finalized during SC57.

Decision SC57-21: The Standing Committee approved the timeline for the process in the 2019-2021 triennium for the City Accreditation.

Agenda item 23: Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

18. The Secretariat presented its report on the status of Sites on the Ramsar List, document SC57 Doc.23 Rev.1, and sought the advice of the Contracting Parties regarding the instruction in Resolution XIII.10 on database-to-database transfer of information.

¹ See <https://www.ramsar.org/activity/funding-organization-database>

19. Participants welcomed the positive news within the report which stands in contrast to the findings of the *Global Wetland Outlook*.
20. The Chair of the STRP drew attention to the European Environment Agency's database-to-database protocols and guidance regarding Birds Directive information. Some countries expressed concerns on the complexity and difficulties on the database to database transfer of information.
21. Algeria reported that, since the end of the reporting period of the document, the updating of 47 of its 50 Ramsar Sites had been completed, and that all 50 Sites would be up to date shortly.
22. Interventions were made by Algeria, Dominican Republic, France, Sweden, and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 24: Ramsar Advisory Missions: Operational guidance

23. The Secretariat presented the draft operational guidance for Ramsar Advisory Missions which was annexed to document SC57 Doc.24, noting the input of the STRP to its preparation.
24. Interventions were made by France, Japan and the United States of America.
25. The Chair of the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to revise the document according to comments submitted by Contracting Parties, and publish it for consideration in a later session.

Agenda item 22: National Reports for COP14

26. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.22 *Draft format for National Reports to COP14*, drawing attention to updates and proposed changes in the report format.
27. Participants drew attention to problems in reconciling information from different legislative regimes within one country; they stressed the importance of maintaining continuity so that historical information was not lost. Attention was drawn to the large number of indicators in the current format and the relative complexity of the wetlands classification system used under the Convention. Some participants had editorial comments.
28. Interventions were made by Armenia, Austria, Australia, Colombia, Japan, Panama, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
29. The SC Chair asked all those with comments to submit them to the Secretariat so that a revised version could be produced for consideration at a later session.

Agenda item 27.1: Implications of joint meetings of the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

30. The Secretariat introduced document SC57 Doc.27.1, noting that this was a response to paragraph 16 of Resolution XIII.8 on *Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021*.

31. The Secretariat had examined two scenarios regarding the implications of back-to-back and overlapping meetings of the STRP and Standing Committee, one in which the meetings ran one after the other and the other with a two-day overlap. They noted capacity and cost implications for the two scenarios.
32. Participants questioned the value of holding overlapping meetings in achieving the objective of fostering communication and synergies, particularly in view of the implications, noting that there was normally relatively little overlap in the agendas of the two meetings.
33. The Chair of the STRP suggested that one or more STRP panel members could be invited to participate in discussions during Standing Committee meetings, addressing important emerging issues or those for which significant new information had become available. This received widespread support. Participants also recalled the possible inclusion of time in the COP14 schedule during which delegations might engage with STRP members on identified priority issues.
34. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, France, Japan, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Decision SC57-22: The Standing Committee agreed on the suggestion that one or more STRP panel members could be invited to participate in discussions during Standing Committee meetings addressing important emerging issues or those for which significant new information had become available.