

Terms of Reference – Strategic Plan Working Group for SP5 (SP5WG)

Submitted by Australia, as Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group (SP5) to the Standing Committee.

Secretariat cover note:

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) Note this report from the Strategic Plan Working Group for SP5;
- b) Review and approve the attached Terms of Reference and workplan to COP14 for SP5WG at Annex 1, noting these will be updated to include any agreed and relevant consequential amendments to the DR (SC59.Doc10) decided by Standing Committee 59 and the decision of Parties at COP14; and
- c) Further note the WG will design a consultation program for SP5, supported by professional facilitators, to engage Parties, IOP's, youth and other relevant stakeholders in the lead up and at COP14, and provide draft text on the 'Strategic Framework to inform SP5' for the proposed Wuhan Declaration.

Background

1. The Standing Committee, through Decision SC59-20, "... established a new working group with membership from Contracting Parties, the STRP and International Organization Partners, to commence preparation of the Fifth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention, with the terms of reference and work plan to be agreed ...and be designed to accommodate the key elements and any additional priority elements and modalities for the Fifth Strategic Plan that may be agreed at COP14..". The Standing Committee further encouraged the participation of members of the Working Group on the Review of the Fourth Strategic Plan in the new working group, for continuity purposes."
2. The Secretariat disseminated the call for nominations for the new WG in February 2022 and nominations received by region and organisation to date are:
 - Africa: Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia, Algeria, Uganda, Chad, Mauritius
 - Asia: Bahrain, Bhutan, China, Iran, Oman (Japan TBC)

- Europe: Finland, Slovenia, Switzerland
 - LAC: Brazil, Nicaragua
 - North America: Canada, Mexico
 - Oceania: Australia
 - IOPs: IWMI, WWT, WI (TBC)
 - STRP: TBC
 - YEW: TBC
3. The nominations provide good regional representation, particularly developing countries and some continuity in membership between the SPWG for SP4. This demonstrates a high level of interest and engagement in this important task.

Inaugural Meeting of the SP5WG

4. The first meeting of the new WG was held on 23 May 2022, attended by Australia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brazil, Chad, China, Finland, Iran, Mexico, Slovenia, Uganda, the STRP, IWMI, WWT and YEW. Switzerland and Iran expressed interest and were accepted as a member of the WG, with Japan to confirm their potential participation.

Election of Chair

5. The first item of business was to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the SP5WG. The Secretariat noted Australia's nomination for the position of the Chair and called for other nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair positions, with no further nominations received.
6. Australia was confirmed as Chair up to COP14. The new Chair noted that Australia is not able to continue as Oceania's Regional Representative on Standing Committee after COP14, as the term is limited to a maximum of two trienniums in accordance with Resolution XIII.4.

Terms of Reference

7. A draft terms of reference for the Working Group and a workplan to COP14 was circulated to WG members ahead of the meeting. Australia presented these terms of reference and noted that they follow the draft best practice Guideline for working groups, prepared by the Effectiveness Working Group, contained in Annex 1 to the DR (SC59.Doc 11)
8. Members noted the need to align the terms of reference with the final text of the DR decided by Standing Committee 59. This has been addressed in recommendation b. above. Brazil and China foreshadowed for the information of WG members, their proposed amendments to the text of the DR that will be proposed in the Plenary session on the Report of the SPWG (Agenda Item 10).
9. Australia noted the emphasis on inclusivity and enabling participation in the proposed composition and regional representation on the WG and its operational structure.

Workplan to COP14

10. The new WG will focus on the design of a program of consultation for SP5 ahead of and as part of a focused side event during COP14. The WG will be assisted in this task by professional facilitators and work closely with the host country and Subgroup on COP14. A budget has been approved by SC for this interim work of the WG.

Strategic Framework to inform SP5 - draft text for Wuhan Declaration

11. Australia presented the zero draft text:
 - Reaffirming wise use as the central principle underpinning the Ramsar Convention and critical to ensuring conservation of wetlands and their ecosystem services for current and future generations.
 - Positioning the wise use of wetlands in the context of the urgent global challenges we face – to reverse biodiversity loss and mitigate global climate change.
 - Building a broad coalition of relevant actors and diverse voices through genuine engagement and collaboration, to set the framework to 2030 and beyond.

12. The Chair indicated there will be a number of opportunities for WG members to refine the text.

Annex 1

Strategic Plan Working Group for SP5

Terms of Reference and Work Plan to COP14

1. Background

The Strategic Plan Working Group for the review of SP4 recommended to Standing Committee (59) in June 2021, that a new Working Group be established ahead of COP14, to ensure there is sufficient time to develop the new strategic plan for adoption at COP15 in 2024.¹ Standing Committee through Decision 59-20 agreed:

- to establish a new working group with membership from Contracting Parties, the STRP and International Organization Partners, to commence preparation of the Fifth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention;
- the terms of reference and work plan to be agreed intersessionally, and be designed to accommodate the key elements and any additional priority elements and modalities for the Fifth Strategic Plan that may be agreed at COP14;
- Encourage the participation of members of the Working Group on the Review of the Fourth Strategic Plan in the new working group, for continuity purposes

In early 2022, the Secretariat issued a call for nominations of members for the new Working Group. The following Parties nominated to become members of the new Working Group to prepare SP5 during the period leading up to COP15: Algeria, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Chad, China, Finland, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Oman, Slovenia, South Africa, and Tunisia, plus the International Water Management Institute and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust on behalf of the Convention's International Organization Partners and an expert of the STRP.

2. Purpose of the SPWG for SP5

The Strategic Plan Working Group for SP5 established by the Standing Committee (Decision SC9-20) is to:

a) develop for consideration at COP15, the fifth Ramsar Strategic Plan 2025-2030, taking account of:

- i) input from Contracting Parties; Convention bodies, working groups and IOPs,
- ii) the outcomes of the review of the fourth Strategic Plan,
- ii) the basic elements for development of the plan [to be agreed at COP14]

[the Goals of the fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan be retained in the fifth Ramsar Strategic Plan, to maintain consistency and continuity in reporting, and that targets and actions be framed to deliver critical wetland contributions to meet global environmental challenges over the implementation period of the new Plan; informed by the Special Edition of the Global Wetland Outlook, the Secretariat's analysis of the national reports to COP14, as well as key elements external to the Convention, Sustainable Development Goals, Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Decade of Restoration, and any relevant work of IPBES or the IPCC;

¹ Legal advice obtained by the Secretariat confirmed the Standing Committee has the authority to establish Working Groups.

recognises the critical role of young people, women, Indigenous and local communities, and the business sector in providing solutions to global environmental challenges by wetland conservation and management;
uses the thematic Annexes to the fourth Strategic Plan in the framing and development of the fifth Strategic Plan]

- b) develop a comprehensive program of consultation and engagement for SP5 that is tailored to the needs of the Contracting Parties, Parties and their regions, and other Convention bodies, IOPs and external stakeholders;
- c) appoint facilitators to undertake preparatory engagement prior to COP14 and facilitate a program of engagement with key stakeholders at COP14,
- d) regularly report its progress to the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat. shall under the guidance of the Working Group, assist with contracting appropriate consultant/s to support the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group.

3. Composition and regional representation

- The working group will have membership from Contracting Parties, with all regions represented, the STRP and International Organization Partners;
- The Chairs of the STRP and CEPA Outreach Panel will be members of the Working Group, and may appoint other Panel members to liaise and provide their expertise to the Group;
- The Working Group may invite external parties to observe and attend meetings as required.

4. Structure, meetings, and Secretariat support

- The Working Group will appoint among itself a Chair, and a Vice Chair and any other roles that it deems necessary;
- The Working Group will hold meetings using means that allow the full and active participation of all members and/or regions in the group. These may be face-to-face (in association with other Ramsar meetings) hybrid or virtual, the latter using an agreed platform to which all members have access, and which provides simultaneous translation;
- The Working Group will take decisions by consensus;
- The Chair and Vice Chair will liaise and work closely with other bodies of the Convention and relevant working groups and/or external parties as necessary for development of SP5;
- The Secretariat will provide secretariat services for the Working Group (meeting invites and minutes) and act as a point of contact within the Secretariat.

5. Work plan to COP14

COP 14 will bring together Contracting Parties, their Focal Points and IOP's, presenting an excellent opportunity to commence consultations on Ramsar SP5, bring Parties up-to-date with the latest international policy developments (CBD, UNFCCC, Stockholm +50 etc) and focus their thinking on the new Ramsar Strategic Plan (SP5) for this critical period to 2030.

The priority tasks of the Working Group is to:

- I. Develop the project scope to engage a consultant/s with a working knowledge of the Convention and demonstrated communication and facilitation expertise to lead the consultation on SP5;
- II. Design a program of consultation and engagement on SP5 at the 14th Conference of the Contracting Parties, working closely with Subgroup on COP14 and the host country;
- III. Develop a work plan and schedule for the preparation of the SP5 for COP15 that can take effect once the basic elements for development of the plan are agreed at COP14.

6. Project Budget

To support the process to develop SP5, unspent funds from the SP4 budget (18K CHF) have been redirected to SP5. Standing Committee through Decision SC59-32, allocated a further 90K CHF to support development of SP5, in accordance with Decision SC59-20 by the Standing Committee to establish a new working group.