

## Report of the Subgroup on Finance, 23 May 2022

*This Report includes the recommendations for the consideration of the Standing Committee made during the meeting of the Subgroup on Finance on 23 May 2022. In case it is needed, the Subgroup will meet again during the week to consider any issues arising from the discussions of the Standing Committee. The revised report with the recommendations for the Standing Committee on these issues will be included in the final report of the meeting.*

The Chair opened the meeting and asked the Subgroup to refer to the actions requested in documents on financial and budgetary matters, noting that the discussions on surplus, allocation of surplus and adjustments to the 2022 budget would be considered after those on the annual contributions, budget scenarios, draft resolution on finance and budgetary matters and the financial implications of draft resolutions.

### **1. Status of annual contributions (document SC59/2022 Doc.8.2)**

The Secretary General briefly summarized the document, noting that the total of contributions due had decreased by 8% compared to 2020. The Secretariat noted the actions on group confirmation of outstanding contributions had been effective in meeting the auditor's requirements.

The Subgroup acknowledged the positive results and thanked the Secretariat and the Subgroup for the good job undertaken. The group also welcomed the decrease in total contributions since 2020, recognizing this outcome as exceptional among comparable organizations, and acknowledged the Secretariat's actions to this end.

The Secretary General noted that the role of the regional representatives in the Standing Committee had been an important factor in the decrease, as well as efforts by the Secretariat to raise the awareness of the Contracting Parties, including the regular reminders sent to the Parties and by highlighting the issue during the regional meetings held in preparation for the Third Extraordinary meeting of the COP in 2021 and COP14 in 2022. She noted that the actions of single Parties could influence the ongoing positive trend and noted the risks associated with long-term outstanding contributions.

The Secretariat clarified its conservative approach to the calculation of related provisions given the new calculation methodology that has been introduced in 2019. The Secretariat has therefore recommended that any unused funds allocated from savings to provisions for outstanding contributions be returned to the surplus for future allocation under this approach.

*Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:*

***The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:***

- i. take note of the status of annual contributions;*
- ii. note the actions listed in paragraphs 12 and 13 of document SC59/2022 Doc.8.2 on group confirmation of outstanding contributions as part of the audit process;*
- iii. note the actions listed in paragraphs 16, 18, 19 and 20 of document SC59/2022 Doc.8.2 to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions by the Contracting Parties;*
- iv. note the changes in annual contributions receivable and in the annual provision against contributions receivable; and*
- v. note the status of the African voluntary contributions.*

## **2. Report on financial matters for 2019-2021 and 2022 (document SC59/2022 Doc.8.1)<sup>1</sup>**

The Secretary General introduced the elements of document SC59/2022 Doc.8.1 relating to the 2021 financial statements, highlighting the inclusion of the audited statements, and noting that the external auditors had found no issues to raise, thus confirming the positive results and improvements of the past years. She noted the savings accumulated in 2019-2021 triennium due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in low implementation in budget lines, in particular on travel, Ramsar Advisory Missions and meetings.

The Subgroup noted the relatively high budget implementation (89%) on salary costs, which has a positive outcome in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other organizations and acknowledged the Secretariat for efforts in this regard.

*Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:*

***The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:***

- i. review and accept the 2021 audited financial statements as of 31 December 2021;*
- ii. note the core budget results for 2021;*
- iii. note the status of the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2021;*
- iv. approve the Secretariat's proposed adjustments to 2021, as described in paragraphs 9.f, 13, 14 and 15 and presented in column H of the table in Annex 2 of document SC59/2022 Doc. 8.1; and*
- v. approve that the pre-committed funds are carried forward from 2021 to 2022, as described in paragraph 10 and presented in column C of the table in Annex 4 of document SC59/2022 Doc. 8.1 and also in column C of the table in Annex 1 Core Budget 2022 of the present report.*

## **3. Budget scenarios for 2023-2025 and draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters (document SC59/2022 Doc.8.3)**

### Budget scenarios for 2023-2025

The Secretariat presented the three scenarios prepared for the 2023-2025 triennium in document SC59 Doc.8.3: Scenario A (0% core budget increase); Scenario B (2.8% increase, with contributions increasing by 2.7%) and Scenario C (4.4%<sup>2</sup> increase, with a 4.3% increase in contributions).

Scenario A requires the allocation of surplus to cover the gap in the budget created with the addition of a position of the Finance and Accounting Assistant and for the increase in the provision for outstanding contributions. Scenario B would include in addition funds for increases in salaries as a

<sup>1</sup> Continued at item 5 below.

<sup>2</sup> This is a correction to document SC59/8022 Doc.8.3.

result of staff performance management and promotions as per IUCN guidelines implemented by the Secretariat since 2019; and Scenario C would include COP15 hosting costs in the core budget as it is the practice in other comparable Conventions.

The group thanked the Secretariat for the information and the transparency on issues related to the surplus. It considered that the large surplus makes the cases for scenarios B and C more difficult, and recommended to present the Scenario A of 0% in core budget increase for the COP14 approval. The Subgroup agreed to continue to fund the addition of a Finance and Accounting Assistant and the estimated increase in outstanding provisions with the 2019-2021 surplus.

The Subgroup highlighted that in light of recent reforms, it was important to continue to keep the budgeting discipline of what is covered by the core and what is covered by non-core funds under the Convention. Also, it was recommended to include in the report a sentence to highlight the exceptional circumstances on which the choice of 0% increase budget was made.

#### Draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters

The Secretariat highlighted that the draft resolution is prepared at the same basis as the Resolution XIII.2 and includes the amendments made by the Subgroup in June 2021, as reported in the June 2021 report – Part I.

The Subgroup agreed on the draft resolution on finance and budgetary matters and no amendments were proposed (see Annex 2 of this report).

The Subgroup requested that the list of 2019-2021 budgeted non-core items, in order of recommended priority, that was included as Annex 3 of Resolution XIII.2, be shared by email with the Subgroup, so that they can share views and start development of the new list of the priorities at the Standing Committee to be included in the draft resolution for consideration at the COP.

#### *Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:*

***The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:***

- i. take note of the contents of document SC59/2022 doc.8.3;***
- ii. instruct the Secretariat due to exceptional circumstances to present to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties only one budget scenario A, representing a 0% increase compared to the 2016-2018 and 2019-2021 triennia and 2022, as described in document SC59/2022 Doc.8.3; and***
- iii. approve the draft resolution on the financial and budgetary matters to be considered at COP14, as presented in the Annex 2 of this report.***

#### **4. Potential financial implications of draft resolutions (document SC59/2022 Doc.8.4)**

The Secretary General introduced the document and explained that this was a preliminary document, that the estimates were presented on the basis of the estimates made by the Parties. She further described that the Secretariat had added input when required and that the staff days required to fulfil activities and task that are already included in the core areas of work of the Secretariat and its work plan are not included. The Secretary General noted that the financial and administrative implications of the draft resolutions will depend on the decisions made by the Standing Committee regarding the content of the draft resolutions. The document will thus need to be revised after the Standing Committee and submitted to the COP14.

**The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:**

- i. take note of the projected administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions submitted to SC59/2022 which would be revised on the basis of the draft resolutions agreed by the SC59/2022.**

**5. Report on financial matters for 2019-2021 and 2022 (document SC59/2022 Doc.8.1) - continued<sup>3</sup>**

The Secretariat introduced the elements of the core budget surplus as of the end of 2021, as summarized in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: 2021 core surplus to be allocated (in '000 CHF)*

<b>(I) Fund balance at 31 December 2021 per audited statements</b>	<b>3,738</b>
<b>Reserve, approved and pre-committed:</b>	
Reserve fund at 15% (Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 33)	762
ExCOP3-approved use of 2020 budget savings (to fill the gap and for outstanding provisions)	196
Pre-committed balances (Table 1 of document SC59/2022 Doc 8.1)	767
April 2022 SC intersessional budget approval for the recruitment of the next Secretary General	89.5
<b>(II) Total reserve, approved and pre-committed</b>	<b>1,815</b>
<b>(III=I-II) 2021 core surplus after approved and pre-committed - to be allocated</b>	<b>1,924</b>

The Secretary General listed the options for possible use of 2021 savings suggested in paragraph 40 of document SC59/2022 Doc.8.1. Regarding the option c) on funding COP14 sponsored delegates' travel costs, the Secretariat explained that the fundraising the full costs would be very challenging given the number international meetings taking place this year for which other Secretariats were fundraising and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Subgroup expressed preference that the non-core budget items continue to be covered by the non-core resources. They trusted that the Secretariat will continue its efforts to fundraise for this purpose.

The group expressed approval of option a) of allocating CHF 228K to cover the core budget gap for core activities of the Secretariat in 2023-2025 triennium. The Subgroup suggested that it was premature to consider option b) to allocate additional resources for the consolidation of Resolutions, as it needed to be subject to further discussion and a decision by the Standing Committee.

The Subgroup also approved the allocation of CHF 360K for the increase of outstanding provisions with the condition that any unused portion be returned to the surplus for allocation at the end of each year within 2023-2025 triennium.

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<sup>3</sup> Continued from item 2 above.

The Secretary General presented the proposal to allocate the remaining balances of “SC58 - 2020 budget and uncommitted carry forward savings” as additional reserve fund savings. The Subgroup expressed that these resources should be maintained in the surplus for allocation by the Standing Committee rather than the creation of a new operational reserve, in the absence of a relevant reserve policy.

The Subgroup recommended that the Standing Committee approve the allocation of 2021 surplus as summarized in Table 2 below and in the Annex 1 of the present report:

*Table 2: Allocation of 2021 core surplus (in '000 CHF)*

<b>(I) SC59/2022 Allocation of core surplus:</b>	<b>1,924</b>
Review of resolutions*	10*
Authorised use of surplus to cover the core budget gap in 2023-2025 triennium, the same as in Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 15	228
Authorised use of surplus to cover increase in provision of outstanding contributions in 2023-2025 triennium, the same as in Resolution ExCOP3.2**	360
<b>(II) Subtotal 2021 surplus allocated</b>	<b>598</b>
<b>(III=I-II) Core surplus balance remaining for future allocations</b>	<b>1,326</b>

\* Subject to outcome of discussions by the resumed SC59/2022

\*\* Any unused portion to be returned to the surplus for allocation at the end of each year within 2023-2025 triennium

*Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:*

***The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:***

- i. approve allocation of 2021 surplus and approve option a) to allocate CHF 228K to cover the budget gap as per the Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 15 and option b) to allocate CHF 10K (tbc) for the review of resolutions subject to the approval by the Standing Committee, as described in paragraph 40 of the document SC59/2022 Doc. 8.1;***
- ii. approve allocation of 2021 surplus of CHF 360K for the increase of outstanding provisions in 2023-2025 triennium with the condition that any unused portion be returned to the surplus for further allocation at the end of each year within 2023-2025 triennium; and***
- iii. note the intersessional allocation of funds to adjust to the ExCOP3-approved core budget for 2022, as described in paragraphs 22 and 38 of document SC59/2022 Doc 8.1. and as presented in Annex 1 of the present report.***

## Annex 1 to the Report of the Subgroup on Finance

### Core Budget 2022

(CHF '000s, includes possible rounding differences)

2022 Ramsar Budget ExCOP3 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (ExCOP3-approved) (A)	SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings (ExCOP3 approved) (B)	Pre-committed 2021 to be spent in 2022 (C)	SC59/2022 adjustments to 2022 ExCOP3 approved budget (D)	Total 2022 budget (E)=(A)+(B)+(C)+(D)
<b>INCOME</b>					
Parties' Contributions	3,779	0	0	0	3,779
Voluntary contributions	1,065	0	0	0	1,065
Income Tax	225	0	0	0	225
Other Income (including Interest Income)	12	0	0	0	12
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>5,081</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,081</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
<b>A. Secretariat Senior Management</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,035</b>
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	990	0	0		990
Travel	40	5	0		45
<b>B. Resource Mobilization and Outreach</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>850</b>
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	438	0	0		438
CEPA Program	30	0	56		86
Comms, Translations, Publications and Reporting Implementation	60	40	57		157
WWD	0	0	12		12
Web/IT support and Development	56	0	0		56
Web re-development	0	0	86		86
Travel	10	5	0		15

<b>2022 Ramsar Budget ExCOP3 Approved  CHF '000s</b>	<b>Approved budget (ExCOP3-approved)  (A)</b>	<b>SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings (ExCOP3 approved)  (B)</b>	<b>Pre-committed 2021 to be spent in 2022  (C)</b>	<b>SC59/2022 adjustments to 2022 ExCOP3 approved budget  (D)</b>	<b>Total 2022 budget  (E)=(A)+(B)+(C)+(D)</b>
<b>C. Regional Advice and Support</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,343</b>
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	1,170	0	0		1,170
Travel	67	10	0		77
Ramsar Advisory Missions	0	0	96		96
<b>D. Support to Regional Initiatives</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>176</b>
Regional networks and centres**	100	0	0		100
Amazon Basin 2021 carry over	0	0	76		76
<b>E. Scientific and Technical Services</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,068</b>
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	651	0	0		651
Travel	18	0	10		28
Travel STRP Chair	5	0	12		17
STRP implementation	35	5	40		80
STRP meetings	50	0	0		50
Strategic Plan SP5 (2022 - 2024)	0	0	90		90
SDG 6.61 (Inventories)	0	0	72		72
Ramsar Sites Information Service (maintenance and develop)	80	0	0		80
<b>G. Administration/Web</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>655</b>
Salaries, social costs and other benefits	337	0	0		337
Staff hiring and departure costs	49	0	0	89.5	139
Travel	0	0	0		0
Equipment/Office Supplies	95	0	0		95
Planning and Capacity building	0	11	73		84

2022 Ramsar Budget ExCOP3 Approved  CHF '000s	Approved budget (ExCOP3-approved)  (A)	SC59 authorised use of 2020 budget savings (ExCOP3 approved)  (B)	Pre-committed 2021 to be spent in 2022  (C)	SC59/2022 adjustments to 2022 ExCOP3 approved budget  (D)	Total 2022 budget  (E)=(A)+(B)+(C)+(D)
H. Standing Committee Services	150	0	25	10	185
Standing Committee delegates' support	45	0	0		45
Standing Committee meetings	10	0	9		19
SC translation	60	0	0		60
Simultaneous interpretation at SC meetings	35	0	0		35
Effectiveness Working Group	0	0	14		14
Resolutions review (Res. XIII.4)	0	0	2	10***	12
J. IUCN Administrative Service Charges (max.)	541	0	0	0	541
Administration, Human Resources, Finance & IT services	541	0	0		541
K. Miscellaneous - Reserve Fund	109	120	62	0	291
Staff Provisions	20	0	0		20
Provision for outstanding contributions*	30	120	0		150
Exchange rate gains / losses	0	0	0		0
Legal Services	59	0	62		121
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>5,081</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,144</b>

**Note:**

\* any unused portion to be returned to savings

\*\*for consideration by SC62 (May-June 2023) for any new Regional Initiatives approved by COP14

\*\*\* subject to the approval by the Standing Committee; If the Standing Committee decides it is not needed, the allocation will be returned to the 2021 surplus for future allocations

**Annex 2 to the Report of the Subgroup on Finance**  
**Draft Resolution 14.xx**  
**Financial and budgetary matters**

1. RECALLING the budgetary provisions established by paragraphs 5 and 6 of Article 6 of the Convention;
2. RECALLING Resolution XII.7 on *Resource mobilization and partnership framework of the Ramsar Convention* and the related provisions of Resolution XIII.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters* and Resolution ExCOP3.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters: 2022 core budget*;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING WITH APPRECIATION the prompt payment by the majority of Contracting Parties of their contributions to the core budget of the Convention; but NOTING WITH CONCERN that a number of Parties have significant outstanding contributions (see document COP14 Doc.xx, *Report on financial and budgetary matters*);
4. NOTING WITH GRATITUDE the additional voluntary financial contributions made by many Contracting Parties, including those from Contracting Parties of Africa specifically earmarked for African Regional Initiatives (in accordance with paragraph 23 of Resolution X.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*), and also the contributions made by non-governmental organizations and private companies for activities undertaken by the Secretariat;
5. RECALLING the *Delegation of Authority to the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands* signed by the Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Chairman of the Convention's Standing Committee on 29 January 1993, and the *Supplementary Note to Delegation of Authority* signed on the same date;
6. ACKNOWLEDGING WITH APPRECIATION the financial and administrative services provided to the Secretariat by IUCN, underpinned by the Services Agreement between Ramsar and IUCN revised in 2009;
7. NOTING that Contracting Parties have been kept informed of the financial situation of the Secretariat through the audited annual financial statements for the years from 2018 to 2021 and the reports of the Standing Committee meetings from 2019 to 2022; and
8. RECOGNIZING the need to continue to strengthen financial partnerships with relevant international organizations and other entities, and to explore additional funding opportunities through their existing financial mechanisms;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. APPRECIATES that, since the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP13), in 2018, the Secretariat has continued to substantially improve its management of the Convention's funds, prudently, efficiently and openly;
10. EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE to the Contracting Parties that have served in the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee during the 2019-2021 triennium and 2022, and in particular to Mexico, which has acted as Chair of the Subgroup;
11. DECIDES that the *Terms of Reference for the Financial Administration of the Convention* contained in Annex 3 to Resolution 5.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters* (1993), is to be applied in

*toto* to the 2023-2025 triennium;

12. FURTHER DECIDES that the Subgroup on Finance will be continued and operate under the aegis of the Standing Committee and with the roles and responsibilities specified in Resolution VI.17 on *Financial and budgetary matters* (1996), and will include one Standing Committee representative from each Ramsar region plus the immediately prior Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, as well as any other interested Contracting Parties, bearing in mind the desirability of equitable regional participation and the need to keep the group to a manageable size, and will designate one of its members as its Chair; and NOTES that travel support for eligible Contracting Parties to attend Subgroup meetings will be limited to the regional representatives of the Standing Committee;

13. NOTES that the 2023-2025 budget includes a core element funded by contributions from Contracting Parties, and that the Secretariat will seek additional non-core resources in line with the priorities identified by the Conference of the Parties; and REQUESTS that the Secretariat continue to develop new approaches and tools to secure voluntary financial support for currently unfunded priority projects;

14. APPROVES the core budget for the 2023-2025 triennium as presented in Annex 1 of the present Resolution, to enable the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024;

15. APPROVES the use of surplus from the core budget for the 2019-2021 triennium of CHF 228,000 to supplement the approved 2023-2025 triennium budget in the following areas: CHF 120,000 for Communications, Translation, Publications and Reporting Implementation, CHF 60,000 for staff travel (CHF 15,000 for travel of Secretariat Senior Management, CHF 15,000 for travel of Resource Mobilization and Outreach and CHF 30,000 for travel of Regional Advice and Support), CHF 15,000 for STRP Implementation, and CHF 33,000 for Planning and Capacity Building; and REQUESTS the Secretariat to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the 2023-2025 triennium<sup>4</sup>;

16. APPROVES the use of CHF 360,000 from surplus from the 2019-2021 triennium to increase the provision on outstanding contributions for the 2023-2025 triennium;

17. URGES Contracting Parties with outstanding contributions to make a renewed effort to settle them as expeditiously as possible to enhance the financial sustainability of the Convention through contributions by all Contracting Parties;

18. REQUESTS that the Secretariat contact Contracting Parties that have outstanding contributions in excess of three years and assist them to identify appropriate options to rectify the situation and to request a plan for making payment of contributions, and report back at each meeting of the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Contracting Parties on activities taken in this regard and results achieved; and AGREES that the Standing Committee should continue to consider appropriate action concerning Parties that have neither paid their outstanding contributions nor submitted a payment plan for this purpose;

19. REQUESTS regional representatives in the Standing Committee to engage Parties from their respective regions with outstanding contributions to encourage them to identify appropriate options to rectify the situation;

20. NOTES WITH CONCERN the situation with non-core contributions from Contracting Parties; and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and others to increase such contributions;

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<sup>4</sup> This paragraph is proposed for budget Scenario A and takes the same approach as paragraph 15 of Resolution XIII.2.

21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and INVITES other governments, financial institutions, International Organization Partners and other implementing partners to support the implementation of the Ramsar Convention;
22. NOTES the resource mobilization work plan for the Convention approved by the Standing Committee and REQUESTS the Secretariat to update it to reflect the priorities identified by the Contracting Parties at COP14 and make it available to the Standing Committee at its 62nd meeting, for its consideration;
23. NOTES WITH APPRECIATION the alignment of the Secretariat with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) policies and procedures for managing non-core funding;
24. REQUESTS the Secretariat to provide to the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) in Africa, on an annual basis, the available balance of the African voluntary contribution fund; and INVITES those RRIs to submit requests to the Secretariat as part of their reports to access available funds in accordance with the provisions of Resolution 14.xx on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2023-2025*;
25. INVITES the African regional representatives in the Standing Committee to decide on the use of those funds referenced in paragraph 24 of the present Resolution, based on the requests submitted by the RRIs, and inform the Secretariat accordingly;
26. REAFFIRMS the decision taken by the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties that requests the Secretariat within its existing legal framework and mandate to assist, as appropriate, Contracting Parties in the administration of non-core funded projects, including but not limited to successful fundraising for RRIs; and that further instructs Secretariat staff identified in Annex 3, supported with core funds, not to be involved in the day-to-day administration of non-core funded projects as this role would be the responsibility of any Secretariat staff supported with non-core funds for that specific purpose;
27. AUTHORIZES the Standing Committee, with the advice of its Subgroup on Finance, to transfer core budget allocations between budget lines as may be required in the light of significant positive or negative changes during the triennium to costs, rates of inflation, interest and tax income projected in the budget, without increasing the assessed contributions of Parties or increasing the charges paid to IUCN above a maximum of 13% of the budget;
28. RECOGNIZES the benefits of flexibility in travel budget lines to deliver on the Secretariat Work Plan for the triennium; and REAFFIRMS the decision taken at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties that authorizes the Secretary General to transfer resources between travel budget lines, ensuring that the Subgroup on Finance is informed and that such transfers are reported to the Standing Committee at its next meeting;
29. DECIDES that the contribution of each Contracting Party to the core budget should be in accordance with the most recent scale of assessments for the contribution of Member States to the United Nations budget as approved by the UN General Assembly, except in the case of Contracting Parties which, in applying the UN scale of assessments, would make annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention core budget of less than CHF 1,000, in which case the annual contribution is to be that amount. Estimated core budget contributions for the 2023-2025 triennium are presented in Annex 2 of the present Resolution;
30. URGES all Contracting Parties to pay their contributions promptly by 1 January of each year,

or as soon thereafter as that country's budget cycle will permit;

31. EXPRESSES GRATITUDE to the governments of Finland, Germany, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America and to Danone and the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation for their voluntary contributions to non-core activities;

32. REAFFIRMS the decision taken at the 11th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties (in Resolution XI.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*) that the Reserve Fund:

- a. provides for unforeseen and unavoidable expenditures;
- b. receives realized triennial core budget surpluses (or deficits);
- c. should not be lower than 6% of the annual core budget of the Convention and not greater than 15%; and
- d. should be administered by the Secretary General with the approval of the Subgroup on Finance established by the Standing Committee;

33. REQUESTS the Secretariat to endeavour to maintain the Reserve Fund over the 2023-2025 triennium and to report annually to the Standing Committee on its status and to seek the concurrence of the Subgroup on Finance prior to any use of the Fund;

34. REAFFIRMS the decision taken at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (in Resolution XII.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*) that authorizes the Secretary General, within the rules of IUCN, to adjust the staffing levels, numbers and structure of the Secretariat presented in Annex 3 of the present Resolution, provided that the adjustments are within the costs indicated and made in accordance with the 1993 *Delegation of Authority to the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands* and its *Supplementary Note*;

35. NOTES with appreciation the transparency and accountability regarding Secretariat operations that the Secretary General has fostered during the past triennium; NOTES that, as a means to further enhance these efforts, the Secretariat has established a section of the Convention website to publish information to ensure transparency and accountability, including *inter alia*: completed and accepted audit reports; financial rules and regulations; annual reports of the Secretary General to the Standing Committee; procedures for engagement with the private sector; materials related to staff codes of conduct and professional ethics; the 1993 delegation of authority and its supplementary note; anti-fraud policies; anti-harassment policies; whistle-blower rules and protections; policies on conflict of interest; policies on gender equity and equality; and any other relevant information; and REQUESTS that the Secretariat pursue these efforts in 2023-2025;

36. REQUESTS the Secretariat to consider Contracting Parties that are on the UN Conference on Trade and Development's List of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as eligible for sponsorship for delegate travel, whether or not they are formally classified as such on economic grounds in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list; and

37. CONFIRMS that the present Resolution and its annexes supersede Resolution XIII.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*, Resolution ExCOP3.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters: 2022 core budget* and paragraph 11.a of Resolution VI.17 on *Financial and budgetary matters*.