

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS  
59th Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Resumed session  
Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 May 2022

**SC59/2022 Com.3**

## **Draft Resolution on the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Ramsar Convention**

*Submitted by the Effectiveness Working Group to the Standing Committee.*

### **Action requested:**

- The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached Draft Resolution for consideration at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

### **Introduction**

At the COP13 meeting, Resolution XIII.3 tasked the Effectiveness Working Group to review the governance structure of the Convention and report its final recommendations, including a Draft Resolution as described below:

“14. REQUESTS the Effectiveness Working Group to review the governance structure of the Convention with the assistance of an independent consultant, as that structure exists at the close of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, for the purpose of:

- a. recommending revisions (as necessary) that further enhance the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, and efficiency of the Convention in order to reduce administrative burden and speed up the processes to achieve the mission of the Ramsar Convention; and
- b. proposing a process to implement its recommendations”.

The Draft Resolution below implements the recommendations of the Effectiveness Working Group, as described in the report of the group.

## Draft Resolution XX

1. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of providing effective institutional arrangements for the Ramsar Convention, a global convention with 172 Parties;
2. RECALLING the Convention's mission of conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world;
3. FURTHER RECALLING Contracting Parties' commitment to work towards achievement of the Convention's mission, both within their own territories and through cooperation globally and with other Contracting Parties;
4. ALSO RECALLING that in Resolution XIII.3 on *Governance of the Convention* the Conference of the Parties established the Effectiveness Working Group to review the governance structure of the Convention and report its final recommendations, including a Draft Resolution;
5. EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE to all bodies and working groups of the Convention for the accomplishments and benefits to the Convention realized as a result of their work;
6. FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the reports and commissioned review on the governance of the Ramsar Convention pursuant to Resolution XIII.3<sup>1</sup>;
7. ALSO RECALLING Resolution XIII.4 on Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention, and subsequent Standing Committee Decisions pertaining to the review of all previous Resolutions and decisions<sup>2</sup>;
8. ACKNOWLEDGING the unique circumstances and challenges that have arisen from the global pandemic, and which have highlighted the importance of effective governance under any circumstances; and
9. HIGHLIGHTING the importance of fully transparent and inclusive modalities of work under the Convention.

### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

109. APPRECIATES the work that has already been accomplished in the implementation of Resolution XIII.4 to retire outdated Resolutions and decisions, and to establish a practice for the Convention to retire outdated Resolutions and decisions automatically when they are superseded by new ones and ENCOURAGES the Secretariat to provide administrative support to parties, at their request, in preparing draft resolutions so as to provide transparent and timely

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<sup>1</sup> (1) Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Review of Governance Structures and Procedures – Findings: The Findings Report; (2) Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Review of Governance Structures and Procedures – A Comparison Report; (3) Final Report – Positive Indications and Measures – Ramsar Convention Governance Review

<sup>2</sup> Decision SC58-19, SC58-20 and SC58-21.

advice regarding the cost of implementing proposed draft resolutions, and improve cross-references, avoid duplication and support consolidation of draft resolutions going forwards;

~~1140~~. FURTHER INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to improve its communications approach towards Contracting Parties, including making recommendations and any cost assessments to that end, to continue strengthening capacity building tools such as virtual workshops and training materials, in order to enhance support to Contracting Parties; and submit an updated Strategy for Parties to consider at SC63;

~~1214~~. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to ~~explore~~ propose approaches, including possible online systems, and in particular, a closed members' portal, continuously updated member address lists, and further improved access to online documents, that would enhance collaboration between Contracting Parties intersessionally, including, but not limited to, in working groups, and in the preparation of draft resolutions by allowing Parties to submit and provide comments on draft resolutions. The Secretariat is ~~requested~~ instructed to report its ~~findings~~ proposals about such technologies, including the costs and benefits of such systems, to ~~SC63~~ SC62 so that Parties can assess whether there is interest in investing convention resources in implementing such technology as a means to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the convention, and if so, recommends this matter is given priority in the deliberations in the sub-group on finance;

~~1312~~. DECIDES that the guidelines, as outlined in Annex 1 will be applied to all future non-permanent subgroups and working groups – ensuring that:

- a. all new non-permanent subgroups and working groups are required to have an agreed timeline;
- b. all groups established by a COP, unless otherwise agreed by Parties or set out in the mandate for the group when it is established, are automatically retired by the next COP; and,
- c. clear Terms of Reference must be established by any new group that is stood up;

~~1413~~. CALLS UPON the Contracting Parties to consider inefficiencies within subsidiary bodies of the Convention related to programmes of work due to established timelines, including appointments of members of subsidiary bodies (including STRP), and ENCOURAGE the Contracting Parties, by COP15, if not earlier, to propose solutions to allow for the efficient commencement of work immediately after COP meetings;

~~1514~~. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat in consultation with interested Contracting Parties, including as appropriate Contracting Parties of the Management Working Group, to assess the challenges affecting ~~review~~ the practices of the convention during the global pandemic period and propose any ways to enhance decision making procedures and maintain the full and effective participation of all Contracting Parties to enable the effective operation of the Convention during exceptional circumstances, including any possible amendments to the Rules of Procedure and taking into account best practices from other international bodies as appropriate. REQUESTS the Secretariat to present the review and proposals for consideration by Parties at COP15, if not before; and

~~1615~~. DECIDES, subject to available resources, to allocate XXXCHF to the Secretariat from surplus funds to fulfil the mandate of this resolution.

## Annex 1: Guidelines for non-permanent subgroups and working groups<sup>3</sup>

### Establishment

As per Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure, in addition to the Standing Committee of the Convention, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and the Conference Bureau, the Conference of the Parties (COP) may establish other committees and working groups if it deems it necessary for the implementation of the Convention.

When working groups are established at a COP through a resolution, clear direction must be given to the working group through that resolution on the following matters:

- Composition and regional representation:  
That the working group consists of interested Standing Committee representatives and other Contracting Parties, keeping in mind the desirability of equitable regional participation, and aiming to have at least one regional representative from each region while keeping the group to a manageable size and striving to be open ended. Where appropriate, Contracting Parties may invite or accept relevant Observers or IOPs to participate in working groups.
- Structure:  
That the working group must designate two of its members as Chair and Co-Chair/Vice - Chair, the latter acting as Rapporteur.
- Mandate:  
The resolution which establishes the working group must provide a clear mandate for the group, including outcomes that should be achieved and outputs that the group should produce, including any reports, guidelines or the suggestion of any draft resolutions to the Standing Committee.
- Terms of Reference:  
That the working group must define its terms of reference for presentation to an upcoming Standing Committee.
- Timeline:  
The resolution must set an agreed timeline<sup>4</sup> for the working group, including:
  - A timeline to update on its work to an appropriate body of the Convention;
  - An agreed timeline for the working group to complete its mandate, report its outcomes and produce any outputs as required; and
  - That the group will automatically be retired by the next COP, unless otherwise agreed by Parties or set out in the mandate for the group when it is established.
- Funding:  
Clarity on any funding allocated to facilitate the working group to accomplish its mandate.

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<sup>3</sup> Guidelines may also apply *inter alia* to ad hoc groups established by the Standing Committee.

<sup>4</sup> Other than in exceptional circumstances.

## **Terms of Reference**

Any working group which is established requires a Terms of Reference (ToR) which has been agreed by the group and presenting to the Standing Committee. When drafting this ToR some points that should be considered as follows:

- Reiterate the mandate and scope of the group as agreed at COP to provide a common and agreed understanding within the group
- The group will take decisions by consensus.
- The anticipated roles of the Chair and Vice-Chair. This may include
  - how they will be appointed (e.g. by group consensus following member nominations)
  - their role and the roles of the wider groups in the coordination and delivery of tasks and meetings as well as reporting the work of the group,
  - How the chair/vice-Chair may facilitate decision making within the group
- How the group will operate in order to deliver the work effectively, for example through meetings, written electronic exchange etc.
- How the group can operate in order to facilitate the full and active participation of all members and regions represented in the group.
- How to ensure the group always has a clear contact point for members of the group including if these contact points change over time.
- How the group will keep a record of its work and/or meetings.
- How working groups will report to a body of the Convention.
- If and how the group should work with any other bodies of the Convention including the Secretariat and other relevant working groups or external parties.
- Set an agreed working schedule for the working group to meet the timelines set by the COP.

## **Retirement**

All working groups established by a COP must automatically be retired by the next COP, unless otherwise agreed by Parties or set out in the mandate for the group when it is established.