Final Report – Positive Indications and Measures – Ramsar Convention Governance Review

This report has been prepared by SRI Executive in response to the Terms of reference issued by the Effectiveness Working Group based on the mandate of Resolution XIII.3. This report reflects the views of the authors and stems from SRI Executive analysis of the governance review findings following its underlaying data gathering exercise. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Effectiveness Working Group.
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1. Introduction

This Final Report – Positive Indications and Measures, is the culmination of the *Review of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Ramsar Convention* which SRI Executive began together with the Effectiveness Working Group (EWG) in July 2019. At COP 13, two draft resolutions were presented to the Contracting Parties that focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Ramsar Convention (see further details in Section 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of Countries</th>
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<th>% Responses per Region for online survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>Oceania</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that SRI Executive remains independent in this report, pointing to findings and positive indications that come directly from respondents with evidence to support the conclusions drawn from the desktop study and the accompanying analysis. Positive indications/measures in this report are for the EWG to consider.

4. COP 13 Draft Resolutions COP 13 doc 18.1 and 18.2). As a result of deliberations at the COP 13 meeting and due to a lack of consensus on adopting either of the draft resolutions’ options, COP Resolution XIII.3 tasked the Effectiveness Working Group to review the governance structure of the Convention for the purpose of 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 proposing a process to implement its recommendations.

The Ramsar Convention subsequently engaged SRI Executive to support the EWG with this review. SRI Executive presented an Inception Report to the EWG on 14th October 2019. This was followed by a review of the Ramsar Conventions’ governance structures and processes which was presented in the Report, *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Review of Governance Structures and Procedures – Findings* (hereinafter referred to as the “Findings Report”) on 9th June 2020. Following the terms of reference for the review, SRI Executive then carried out a comparison benchmarking of the Ramsar Convention...
with 6 other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)\(^1\) identified by the EWG. This MEA Comparison Report (hereinafter referred to as the “Comparison Report”) was presented to the EWG on 16\(^{th}\) September 2020.

The present Final Report in its entirety aims at providing a consolidation/overview of the overall findings in response to the EWG chosen agile approach to the work requesting 3 separate reports on the Governance Review:

- Findings Report,
- MEAs comparison Report,
- Final report (consolidating the previous 2).

The Final Report overview draws, often verbatim, from the underlying documents. The results of the review of the Ramsar Convention’s governance structure and processes are set out in in full in the Findings Report.

The Final Report presents SRI analysis of the review findings as a result of the underlying data gathering exercise using 3 different approaches as stated (desktop review, 1:1 interviews & online survey, MEAs comparison). SRI Executive’s analysis has been carried out through SRI chosen methodology of cross-referencing different data sets as the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of problems than either approach alone. The methodology applies equal weight to all data sets\(^2\).

SRI Executive analysed the collective data gathered to identify matters of concern and/or challenges to be presented for EWG consideration. SRI suggested measures in this report stem from this data analysis in response to the Terms of Reference for the Ramsar Governance Review requesting to provide positive indications to improve the Convention’s effectiveness.

2. Executive Summary

**Overall objective:**

The measures presented in this report are in response to the Terms of Reference for the Ramsar Governance Review requesting the consultant to provide positive indications for the EWG to consider which will support the initial stated context and aim of the review which is to review, for the purpose of recommending revisions (as necessary) that further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention.

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\(^2\) Why use mixed methods research
The Ramsar Governance Review

The governance review first assessed the Convention’s overall governance against 5 governance assessment criteria (Clarity, Legitimacy, Accountability, Effectiveness, Cost Efficiency). The review showed that governance structures and processes as set out in the governance documentation have clear mandates, there are processes in place to ensure accountability between the governance bodies, and legitimacy is achieved by providing representation and decision-making power to all Contracting Parties.

The review also used 16 1:1 interviews and an online survey with 79 respondents (regional breakdown viewable in 3. Methodology section in the full report) to gain insight into the Contracting Parties’ views. Here, respondents provided views that were at times in contradiction of the governance documentation (for more comprehensive data on the interview and online survey data please refer to the Findings Report). While the desk review of documents found the information to be readily available, some respondents considered that mandates and terms of reference were less clear for the subgroups, as several resolutions and decisions combined together ultimately set out the full or final mandate in some instances. This means that in practice, while the information exists and is available, comments on lack of accountability are based on some respondents’ perceived low internal flows of information on follow-up of implementation of resolutions and decisions which are taken at the COP and/or SC.

The stakeholders interviewed all felt that legitimacy of the Convention is strong. The concerns raised regarding legitimacy related to the varying levels of capacity and political will between the different CPs, which is a common concern and dilemma for any multilateral organisation that is dependent on the political will and engagement of its member states. Furthermore, effectiveness of the Convention is perceived by some CPs as reduced by the current processes, for example related to putting forward resolutions, which some CPs considered to have rules that prescribe a less than effective manner of working.

The Ramsar Convention’s governance processes are seen to promote and move the mission of the Convention forward, but it was also evident from the review findings that CPs’ comments on lack of accountability are based on perceived low internal flow of information on follow-up of implementation of resolutions and decisions which are taken at the COP and SC.

In addition to the review of Ramsar’s overall governance, the Findings Report identified a number of matters of concern for individual governance bodies by combining the responses to the 1:1 interviews, the online survey, and the desk review (in line with SRI methodology). In this Final Report, they have been used by SRI to identify possible changes and thereto related positive measures (outlined in full in section 7 of this Report). These were:

**COP:** the efficiency of the COP is most affected by the process to prepare and submit resolutions, and the varying capacity and knowledge of delegates. The review highlighted

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3 16 total interviews were undertaken to gain insight into the Contracting Parties’ views. 11 are included as country interviews while the additional 5 were undertaken with members of Ramsar’s governance.
that there is a need for the procedure to be amended so that the scrutiny of resolutions leads to them being clearer. There is also need for a more effective process in reporting and follow-up on adopted resolutions. Varying capacity and knowledge of the delegates, as well as language issues, may prevent CPs from being able to participate fully at governance meetings.

**Standing Committee:** the lack of follow-up from previous meetings, specifically in relation to reporting of subgroups, is seen to need improvement. Also, there are reported variations in the ability of all the Standing Committee members to timely prepare for SC meetings. In addition, the review highlights the need for more clarity on mandates and Rules of Procedure for the Standing Committee and subgroups. Responses in interviews and the online survey show there are still, at times, discussions on mandates and process taking up time which could otherwise be dedicated to discussing and developing the technical aspects of wetland management. Some CPs considered that that the Standing Committee should have its own Rules of Procedure.

**Subgroups governance:** CPs indicated they would like a clearer description of the mandate of subgroups so that mandate descriptions are in one place rather than pieced together in different resolutions. For example, the mandate of the MWG is set out in several different resolutions. Also, in examining the governance of STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel, it was found that more clarity is needed on the appointment process to these groups to improve their efficiency.

**Secretariat:** a majority of the responses indicate that the Secretariat fulfils its mandate well to the extent that it has the capacity to do so. The review also indicates that overall governance would be more effective if the Secretariat provided more pro-active and substantive support to CPs to build their capacity to (1) understand the Convention’s governance and (2) prepare draft resolutions.

In addition to the internal Ramsar governance review, The MEA comparative analysis showed the following findings:

Efficient administration, follow-up and monitoring of Resolutions and Decisions is a significant factor in increasing clarity around governance structures and processes. Furthermore, clarity around mandates and reporting of Subgroups is recognised by all the MEAs as important for more efficient operations of the MEA’s governance. As a result, a majority of the MEAs reviewed have Separate Rules of Procedure for the different governance bodies. Similarly, clarity of mandate and efficient commencement of work for Scientific Committees is found to support more informed debates and action at COP/GA meetings.

On matters of legitimacy, the challenge of diversity of the delegates’ capacity at COP is common to all the MEA Conventions, and difficult to resolve.

On matters of effectiveness, support from a Host Institution is found to be an impacting factor on efficient management of governance processes as it alleviates the often heavy burden of MEA governance processes from the MEAs’ own secretariat staff. Similarly,

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4 This governance review has not at present examined the structures and processes of the hosting agreement between IUCN and the Ramsar Convention but it is recognized that this may have implications for the efficiency of the Ramsar Convention’s governance.
support from specific bodies in reviewing draft resolutions increases the effectiveness of passing those resolutions, and supports more effective post-COP implementation. Finally, Communication to CPs between COPs is a common challenge, where clear and helpful publication on websites is seen as the most used solution.

Measures

As requested in the Terms of Reference, SRI Executive has proposed the following measures for consideration and further refinement and addition by the EWG. More detail on these measures, including potential feasibility considerations, can be found in Section 7. Measures.

- **Measure #1 Consolidation of Resolutions and Decisions:** The EWG should support the ongoing process for reviewing the body of adopted Resolutions and Decisions, to retire and consolidate, where appropriate. In addition, it is proposed that separate governance documentation be produced from the consolidation, and that a structure for registering and communicating resolutions be established.

  As also detailed in Section 7 of the Report, we suggest that the EWG consider proposing a new COP resolution that clearly sets out the mandate, member composition and nomination process of the CEPA OP, based on the consolidation work mentioned above.

- **Measure #2 Fixed timeline for non-permanent sub- and working groups:** Having retired all past non-permanent working groups, a draft Resolution could set out a process where all existing non-permanent subgroups/working groups are retired and all new non-permanent subgroups/working groups are given a fixed timeline for existence.

- **Measure #3 Shift in sequence and timing of STRP workplan and members appointment:** We suggest that the process for approving the STRP workplan priorities together with the selection process of its members are carried out within the triennium in between COPs ready to be adopted by the COP followed by immediate appointment of STRP members to afford the STRP a full triennium to carry out their work.

- **Measure #4 Improved support and communication to CPs:** There is no simple measure to ensure a change in the level of support from the Ramsar Secretariat to the CPs as this is very much reliant on the resources available. We do however feel that the EWG should explore several options, outlined in Section 7: Measure #4.
3. Methodology

SRI Executive takes a principles-driven and change management approach to governance reviews. Therefore, this review utilised multiple methods to collect data. The evidence could then inform practical discussion amongst the EWG to own the findings and come up with their own solutions that can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Ramsar Convention.

These multiple sources included a significant desk and literature review, an online survey for all the Contracting Parties, and key informant interviews with individuals identified by the EWG who had insights into the Ramsar Convention. Interviews were also carried out with individuals holding a governance office of the comparative Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), as well as governance officers at the MEAs’ secretariats. Each source of evidence was designed collaboratively with the EWG. This ensured that the questions we posed and the framework for this review were fit for purpose. To ensure our independence, this review also sought to include data from multiple sources wherever possible to ground our findings. Prior to designing the main data collection tools, the EWG and SRI Executive agreed upon a set of key assessment criteria that formulated the framework for the review. Contributions included but are not limited to: The selection of the key informant interview sample, the key criteria, the survey and evaluation framework including the overarching evaluation questions (OEQ) and main evaluation questions (MEQ) this review sought to answer. The assessment criteria are defined in this report and are in line with international best practice. This review sought to understand the Clarity, Legitimacy, Accountability, Effectiveness, and Cost Efficiency of Ramsar Convention’s Governance. The final evaluation framework and assessment criteria can be found in Error! Reference source not found..

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5 As part of this evaluation process, SRI Executive and the EWG developed seven broad, overarching evaluation questions (OEQs) that were used to measure the clarity of roles and responsibilities, perceived legitimacy of the governance bodies, accountability of governance bodies to the COP, effectiveness of governance bodies in practice, and the cost of Ramsar’s governance structure. The main evaluation questions (MEQs) are more specific sub-questions that seek to answer the overarching evaluation questions more specifically. These questions can be found in Annex 1: Final Evaluation Questions.
The first source we used in this process was the desk and literature review, which included a review of internal Ramsar governance documents including, but not limited to, the scope and mandate of each subsidiary body, as well as the composition, reporting, structure, and previous governance resolutions (a full list of all documentation reviewed is available in Annex 4: Documents Reviewed). The scope of the review included the following bodies and their related processes: The Conference of the Parties (COP), Standing Committee (SC), subgroups, the Secretariat, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and CEPA Oversight Panel.

To get an understanding of how the broader Ramsar governance structure functions, SRI Executive reviewed the Convention’s internal processes, examining key areas such as preparing and consolidating resolutions and how communications flow between and within bodies. As processes on paper may be experienced differently in practice, it is important to understand and assess ways of working, potential barriers, and areas that influence the effectiveness and efficiency of Ramsar’s governance in practice. While this area may not be perceived as “scientific,” it is an important consideration as behaviours drive progress and thus, can inhibit effectiveness and efficiency in a governance context. To help answer those questions, and other key questions within the agreed upon governance criteria, we used an online survey that had closed and open style questions for respondents to answer; SRI Executive complemented this data with 1:1 key informant interviews. This approach is best practice in the field as it draws upon evaluation theory and allows for collection of diverse evidence, where the respondents are informed and able to speak to the questions at hand. It is widely used in governance reviews and the implementation of any form of change within a system, including an intergovernmental organization.
The stakeholders that were invited to interview were approved by the EWG in advance, as they were considered the most appropriate entry point to garner perspectives that would add value to this exercise. It is important to note that this set of interviews was meant to serve as a representative sample (geographically and according to area of expertise and experience) of the Contracting Parties. It would be unusual to see a governance review that includes a majority or all CPs to draw initial findings or conclusions. SRI Executive supplemented these interviews with an open invitation to all CPs to complete the global survey, ensuring this process was inclusive and diverse, and most importantly, confidential. While collating and reviewing data in the back end of the survey tool, SRI Executive also removed any duplicates to ensure fairness and accuracy of the data collected.

The graphic below shows the number of respondent CPs to the online survey per Ramsar region. The graphic merely shows that responses were received from CPs in all the Ramsar regions. It is understood by SRI Executive that the division of CPs into the different Ramsar Regions is a decision made by the COP and the percentage of responses is only to illustrate the geographical spread of the responses. All responses have been recorded and analysed in the same way and no varying weight has been placed on responses in relation to percentage answers in any way.

Table 1 – number of responses received from online survey and 1:1 interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>8%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 The division of countries according to Ramsar Convention’s website.
7 This figure is 2 less than the 81 online survey responses noted in the figure above as 2 countries responded twice and 1 reply for each was discarded.
8 16 total interviews were undertaken to gain insight into the Contracting Parties’ views. 11 are included as country interviews while the additional 5 were undertaken with members of Ramsar’s governance.
It is important to note that SRI Executive remains independent in this report, pointing to findings and positive indications that come directly from respondents with evidence to support the conclusions drawn from the desktop study and the accompanying analysis. Positive indications/measures in this report are for the EWG to consider.

4. COP 13 Draft Resolutions COP 13 doc 18.1 and 18.2

At the Ramsar Convention COP 13 meeting in 2018, two draft resolutions focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention were presented for consideration by the Contracting Parties. The Standing Committee SC54 had discussed both proposals prior to the COP without reaching a conclusion on how to bring them together. The Standing Committee encouraged interested Parties to continue multilateral discussions on this issue in preparation for COP13 to seek mutually agreeable solutions to achieve a common goal and decided that COP13 could benefit from considering these two draft resolutions together.

As set out above in the Introduction, the Contracting Parties were unable to find consensus and mutually agreeable solutions in relation to the content of the two draft resolutions. SRI Executive considered the two draft resolutions at the start of the review to be informed on the initial intentions and suggestions for measures that the Contracting Parties had envisaged. As can be seen in the table below, the proposals vary from small adjustments to existing governance bodies or procedures to significant changes to the governance structure and procedures.

The two draft resolutions were considered during the review of the Ramsar Convention. A summary of the proposals set out in the Resolutions are set out below. We have also indicated where a proposal in the draft resolutions is linked to a Measure proposed in this report (6. Summary – Review Findings in relation to specific governance bodies or processes below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Draft Resolution 18.1</th>
<th>Draft Resolution 18.2</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Make use of “Friends of the Chair” processes, as appropriate, to seek to enhance efficiency and promote effective meetings by delegating matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make better use of working group processes by delegating long term issues to be done by working groups inter-sessionally</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Retire duplicative/inefficient working groups (CEPA Working Group, Facilitation Working Group, Language Strategy) (Measure #1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Revise and update the mandate of the MWG, specifically in relation to oversight of Memoranda of Understanding and Oversight of the STRP (Measure #1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure that working group processes have clear mandates and scopes, are regionally representative and open (Measure #2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dissolve the SC and all its subsidiary bodies (CEPA Oversight Panel, Subgroup of Finance, MWG, Executive Team, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish a Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to act as oversight body between COP, liaise with Secretariat on administrative matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to carry out substantive interim work with support from the Science-Policy Interface</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Finance and Admin Committee sits underneath OEWG</td>
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</table>
In relation to the findings of the governance review of the Ramsar Convention, we can note from the responses in the online survey and interviews that respondents considered that clearer mandates and specific timelines for subgroups/working groups are necessary, which supports some of the proposals in draft Resolution 18.1. However, as evidenced in the Findings Report, draft Resolution 18.1 does not provide a full reflection of the change sought by Contracting Parties that responded. Nor did the findings provide sufficient evidence that the structural changes set out in draft Resolution 18.2 were requested or referred to by the CPs that responded.

5. Summary – Governance Review Assessment Criteria – Overall Findings

The Findings Report provides the full results of the review in relation to overall insights from the desk review, online survey responses and 1:1 interviews on the governance assessment criteria of clarity, legitimacy, accountability, effectiveness and cost. It provides an overall picture of where, within each assessment criteria, there is evidence of challenges. In the present Final Report, SRI summarises those findings to present an overview, however full details can be found in Section 3 of the Findings Report, pages 7-10.

5.1 CLARITY

**Definition:** Governance mandate, tasks and responsibilities for decisions and actions in the Convention are clearly delineated, allocated and accepted.

**Ramsar Governance Review Finding #5.1**

The desk review, 1:1 interviews and online survey all highlighted that the governance documentation is clear on mandates, tasks, and functions for the COP and SC but less clear for the subgroups.

The desk review showed that there is clarity in relation to all the governance bodies examined, although at times, many resolutions needed to be examined to pull together a full picture of the mandate of some subgroups, which affects clarity and effectiveness.

The 1:1 interviews and online survey showed that respondents considered that the governance documentation is clear on mandates, tasks, and functions for the COP and SC but that the language in resolutions and decisions can at times cause a lack of clarity in relation to implementation of tasks designated to the subsidiary governance bodies or CPs. This causes, at times, procedural issues to take prominence in agendas and deliberations in the place of substantive and technical discussions on wetland management.
There is also a mismatch between clear governance tasks and functions set out in documentation and how these are understood and perceived by CPs. A substantial number of CPs responded in interviews and in the online survey that they consider that there is a lack of clarity as to tasks and functions. It is perceived that not sufficient information is received about governance processes and progress on work between the COPs.

5.2 LEGITIMACY

Definition: All parties to the Convention are fairly represented, whether directly or by a legitimate representative, and are informed and empowered to validate or question all decisions taken at the COPs.

Ramsar Governance Review Finding # 5.2

Varying levels of capacity and political will between the different CPs affect the perceived legitimacy of the Ramsar Convention that is expressly granted in the Convention’s official documentation.

The desk review, 1:1 interviews and online survey highlighted that all CPs and observers (to the extent permitted) are provided the opportunity to participate in the fullest manner at all levels of governance of the Convention. Legitimacy as set out in the governance documents is strong.

Legitimacy concerns were raised about varying levels of capacity and political will between the different CPs and the subsequent impact on CPs’ ability to effectively participate during governance meetings. Interviews and surveys showed that there is a perception that certain countries are able to more actively engage in the Convention’s governance with larger delegations, favourable logistics and language capacity; these are all factors which can negatively affect CP’s actual ability to be represented and engage.

5.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Definition: The decision-making bodies of the Convention are accessible to their stakeholders, who are informed and empowered to question decisions taken. All governance bodies are seen as responsible and accountable for the decisions they take.

Ramsar Governance Review Finding # 5.3

Lack of accountability within governance processes is based on perceived low internal flows of information on follow-up of implementation of resolutions and decisions which are taken at the COP and SC.

This is an area where strong operational accountability is evidenced by the high rate of submission of national reports to the COP. However, responses to 1:1 interviews and the online survey showed a thread highlighting little or no accountability in relation to implementation within the Ramsar Convention of the governance processes. The lack of accountability stems from the perception of CPs that they are not well informed of the work that is carried out by different governance bodies between the COP. The responses to the online survey showed that CPs therefore do not actively hold each other to account at governance meetings. We note that some accountability mechanisms exist and may be addressed as part of the measures’ narrative.

9 In comparison to the other MEA Conventions reviewed (for example LC/LP had 50-60% of CPs report; CMS had a 70%) Ramsar Convention has a reporting rate of over 80%.
5.4 EFFECTIVENESS

**Definition:** The governance bodies deliver, in a timely and effective manner, on the objectives set out by their mandates in the Convention.

**Ramsar Governance Review Finding #4.4**

Factors that reduce effectiveness are mainly the administrative process related to drafting resolutions, and the fact that the rules that govern this process do not provide for the most effective manner of working.

The majority of CPs interviewed and surveyed felt that the governance of the Ramsar Convention supports the progress of work towards the Vision and Mission of the Convention as a whole. There is also a strong mix of skills and experiences at the COP and within the SC, which allows there to be proper and efficient management of the governance.

The 1:1 interviews and online survey responses show there is a perceived lack of communication between COPs, even though all documentation is available on the Ramsar website. There is still a perception that limited follow-up information is shared after these meetings and that communication is only picked up again when preparation for the next COP needs to start. This results in a gap in knowledge of the stakeholders and reduces ability to effectively engage and take decisions in conjunction with the next COP meetings.

5.5 COST

**Definition:** The cost of governance is justifiable relative to its delivery of impact.

**Ramsar Governance Review Finding #5.5**

The desk review shows that budget accountability, managed by the Secretariat and overseen by the Subgroup on Finance, is seen to have been improved.

It is evident in reports from the SC and the Subgroup on Finance that attempts are being made to explore how financing can be improved to increase the number of the minimum contributions being paid.

6. Summary – Review Findings in relation to specific governance bodies or processes

The Findings Report subsequently presented the review of each governance body within the Ramsar Convention against the five governance assessment criteria. We have set out below the main governance review findings that came out of this more specific review (presented in the Findings Report in boxes at the end of each subsection in section 4, pages 10-30). In addition, where relevant, the findings from the MEA Comparison Review are also noted against the Ramsar Review Findings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Findings of the Ramsar Governance Review</th>
<th>MEA Review Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.1 Process to prepare and submit resolutions to the COP:</strong></td>
<td>Finding #1.1 Administration of Resolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents considered that there is a need for the procedure for preparing draft Resolutions to be amended so that the scrutiny of resolutions becomes easier and leads to them being clearer.</td>
<td>Administration, follow-up and monitoring of Resolutions and Decisions passed at COP/GA is a significant factor in increasing clarity around governance structures and processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is noted that work has begun since the last COP (Resolution 13.4 and SC58 report) to review all resolutions in order to find duplications and therefore be able to propose to the COP that redundant resolutions and portions thereof are combined and outdated resolutions and portions thereof are retired.</td>
<td>Finding #4.2 Review of resolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from specific bodies in reviewing draft resolutions increases the effectiveness of passing the resolutions and supports more effective post-COP/GA implementation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.2 Varying capacity and knowledge of delegates:</strong> The Convention is legitimate and fully represented by its stakeholders, the Contracting Parties, who all have the right to vote. As noted above, resolutions are approved by consensus with objections noted. However, the varying capacity and knowledge of the delegates, as well as language issues, means that it is not possible to conclude whether delegates, in reality, participate actively, although meetings reports do, to some extent, note the CPs that have commented or raised an objection. This may prevent CPs from being able to participate fully (which is noted in responses in 1:1 interviews and online survey). There is also a large discrepancy between the institutional knowledge as the same delegate of a CP does not always attend several COPs.</td>
<td>Finding #2.1 Diversity of delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenge of diversity of the delegates’ capacity at COP/GA is common to all the MEA Conventions, and difficult to solve.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.3 Follow-up from previous meetings,</strong> specifically in relation to reporting of subgroups, is seen to be weak and therefore the ability of all the Standing Committee members to be prepared for the meeting is felt to be varied.</td>
<td>Finding #4.3 Communication to CPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication to CPs between COP/GA is a common challenge, where clear and helpful publication on websites is seen as the most used solution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.4 Separate Rules of Procedure for the Standing Committee:</strong> The Rules of Procedure for the COP sets out in Rule 25 that the Rules of Procedure for the COP shall apply <em>mutatis mutandis</em> to the SC (and all other subgroups). This means that the Rules of Procedure must be re-interpreted for the SC meetings. Proposals for changes to the Rules of</td>
<td>Finding #1.3 Separate Rules of Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A majority of the MEAs reviewed have Separate Rules of Procedure for the different governance bodies.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We note that SC-48 made the decision not to take this approach and instead to continue with a single</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure at COP 13 attempted to clarify the rules relating to the COP processes, to distinguish them from the rule that would also apply to other governance body meetings. However, the responses in interviews and the online survey show there is still, at times, discussion on process taking up time which could otherwise be dedicated to discussing and developing the technical aspects of wetlands’ management.

### Finding #1.2 Mandates of Subgroups

Clarity around mandates and reporting of Subgroups is recognised by all the Conventions as important for more efficient operations of the MEA Convention’s governance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.5 CPs would like a clearer description of the mandate of subgroups so that mandate descriptions are in one place rather than pieced together in different resolutions.</th>
<th>Finding #1.2 Mandates of Subgroups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The desk review shows that there is documentation that sets out the scope of the mandate for the MWG, Subgroup on Finance and the Executive Team but there is no consolidation of the various additions to mandates which occur from resolutions and/or decisions subsequent to the subgroup being created.</td>
<td>Clarity around mandates and reporting of Subgroups is recognised by all the Conventions as important for more efficient operations of the MEA Convention’s governance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Finding #1.4 Efficient commencement of Scientific Committee work

Clarity of mandate and efficient commencement of work for Scientific Committees supports more informed debates and action at COP/GA meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.6 More clarity as to the appointment process for members of the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel is needed to improve efficiency of work by these subgroups.</th>
<th>Finding #1.4 Efficient commencement of Scientific Committee work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The desk review shows that there is documentation that sets out the scope of the mandate and appointments to the STRP and CEPA Oversight Panel and it is clearly understood by the CPs. However, the desk review and 1:1 interviews show there is a lack of clarity on the process to choose members for the CEPA Oversight Panel and that the commencement of work for the STRP is delayed as their thematic priority areas of work are first set at the COP meeting, and then developed into a workplan, approved by the next SC meeting.</td>
<td>Clarity of mandate and efficient commencement of work for Scientific Committees supports more informed debates and action at COP/GA meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Finding #1.1 Administration of Resolutions

Administration, follow-up and monitoring of Resolutions and Decisions passed at COP/GA is a significant factor in increasing clarity around governance structures and processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.7 A majority of the responses show that governance would be more effective with more pro-active and substantive support to CPs by the Secretariat to help them understand the Convention’s governance and therefore be more effective in their own governance work (e.g. in the preparation of resolutions). At the same time there is understanding that the Secretariat is constrained (limited finances, limited staff &amp; time) in the amount of additional support it</th>
<th>Finding #1.1 Administration of Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>set of Rules that are applied mutatis mutandis as had been the practice since Ramsar’s inception. We also note how findings indicate that confusion still arises from having the same set of rules.</td>
<td>Administration, follow-up and monitoring of Resolutions and Decisions passed at COP/GA is a significant factor in increasing clarity around governance structures and processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Finding #4.1 Support from Host Institution

| Finding #4.1 Support from Host Institution |
| --- | --- |
| can give to CPs in relation to governance meetings and processes. | Support from Host Institution is a significant factor for effective management of governance processes. |
7. Measures Suggested by SRI Executive for Consideration by the EWG

The measures proposed below are designed to consider a change management approach. They also recognise that the Ramsar Convention has already established the EWG to assess options based on evidence, gain the necessary buy-in for any possible future change and support communication methods needed to achieve any changes effectively and transparently. Any measure outlined in this section is intended to support dialogue, the review of facts and findings, the drafting of proposals and ultimately to ensure each measure proposed is realistic and driven based on data uncovered through a variety of sources.

It should be noted that the Measures are not set out in direct connection to specific findings. This is because a single measure can provide possible solutions for a variety of challenges which the review has highlighted.

In addition, where possible, we have indicated how the MEAs reviewed experienced implementation of changes that they informed us about in our interviews. Recognising that all MEAs operate within different contexts, the information provided will have to be put into the Ramsar Convention’s own operational context by the EWG when considering proposals for recommendations to COP 14.

Finally, it is also indicated under each measure, whether implementing the measure would require short or long-term implementation and whether it would require a high or low level of resources (staff time and/or funding). As feasibility as a concept is highly dependent on internal resources, expertise, capacity, and readiness, these are indications that will need to be complemented with further internal information as to the capacity of, among others, the Ramsar Secretariat and then used by the EWG for the measures to be as realistic and pragmatic as possible.

Measure #1
SRI Executive suggests that the work currently being carried out on the review of resolutions/recommendations/Standing Committee decisions by the Ramsar Secretariat is a measure that should be continued, and concluded to a point where the COP can take the necessary decisions to retire obsolete resolutions/recommendations/Standing Committee decisions and set a structure for consolidating the remaining resolutions, recommendations and Standing Committee decisions.

Specifically, we would propose that the consolidation of resolutions and decisions results in specific documentation that sets out the mandate, appointment processes and reporting tasks of all subgroups (significantly the Executive Team, Subgroup on Finance, MWG, STRP and CEPA OP which were all specifically mentioned as subgroups with unclear mandates in the survey and interview responses).

In relation to the CEPA OP, SRI Executive suggest that based on the consolidation of the resolutions and decisions on the CEPA OP, a new COP resolution that clearly sets out the mandate and member composition of the CEPA OP be proposed by the EWG. It has already been recognised by the Secretariat and SC that the COP resolutions and SC decisions on the CEPA OP are contradictory and provide no means for clearly establishing the CEPA OP. SC57-5 tasked the Secretariat with providing a temporary composition and selection process which was adopted intersessionally by the SC in 2019 but did not provide a longer term solution, which a draft EWG resolution on this issue would do.

In addition, the EWG can consider whether to create separate Rules of Procedure for the Standing Committee, as a measure to provide clarity for the mandate and functioning of the Standing Committee. However, in doing so it should note that CPs considered having separate rules of procedure for different convention bodies and at SC-48 made the decision not to take this approach.
and instead to continue with a single set of Rules that are applied *mutatis mutandis* as had been the practice since Ramsar’s inception. It should also be noted that this analysis did not examine why or how Ramsar Contracting Parties made that decision in 2015.

Overall, we see this measure as providing the following effects:

i. Stronger clarity to the structure and processes of the Ramsar Convention governance.
ii. Provide CPs with clearer information which will support a decrease in the varying capacity of delegates participating at governance meetings.
iii. Provide a clear and structured basis to support the Secretariat’s work when it supports CPs and the governance bodies in its review of draft resolutions.
iv. Reduce the need for clarification and interpretation of governance rules and procedures.

**Specific MEA feedback:** CITES and CMS noted that their reviews of resolutions and restructuring into a system of dividing decisions into Resolutions (policy direction) and Decisions (specific actions and tasks that are timebound) were a direct response to the difficulty of establishing clear mandates and follow-up processes on work being carried out by different governance bodies.

Both MEAs noted that it was a long and expensive process (it took close to 3 years for CITES to finalise and CMS is currently still undertaking the review). CITES has noticed a significant difference in efficiency of governance and an increase of engagement by CPs.

It is recognised that the Ramsar Convention has had a similar structure of Resolutions (policy direction and interpretation of the Convention) and Recommendations (actions requested by COP) until 1999. It would therefore be important for the EWG to consider if the nature of governance work has changed in a significant manner to warrant a re-consideration of the structure of the decisions made at the COP and SC meetings. Based on the work of consolidating all previous resolutions, recommendations and decisions, it may become clearer as to which option for categorising future resolutions and decisions is most efficient. For example, the EWG can consider:

1. Establishing a categorisation that is noted in the title of a resolution
2. Including time limitations or reporting deadlines in the title of resolutions
3. Giving resolutions that provide Ramsar Convention policy direction and interpretation a specific name and giving resolutions that provide instructions for activities between COPs a different name.

**Feasibility**

As there is ongoing work by a consultant to review all of the Resolutions and Recommendations, this measure can be incorporated into the work that is already being carried out. The measure to establish dedicated documentation for mandates of all governance bodies and subgroups should be a short-term measure, implemented for the next COP. A proposal to introduce a new system for classifying resolutions in any manner may be introduced through the amendment of Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure for the next COP (short-term measure). In addition, or alternatively, it would require a restructure of how the resolutions are presented on the Ramsar Convention website. This we understand may be a long-term project and require additional funding to adjust the website.

**Measure #2**

From COP 14, SRI Executive suggests that a Resolution be passed that retires all existing non-permanent subgroups/working groups (not permanent subgroups such as Subgroup on Finance, or Management Working Group, The Executive Team) and that specific resolutions be passed to create
new, time limited subgroups/working groups as needed. It is recognised that Resolution XIII.3 retired all subgroups that did not have ongoing work. However, in order to eliminate evergreen subgroups, we suggest below that all existing and any new subgroups be given new mandates with fixed timelines.

The draft Resolution would set out a process where all new non-permanent subgroups/working groups are given a fixed timeline for existence. Alternatively, a blanket rule that any subgroup or working group created by the COP or SC may only be in existence until the next COP meeting and is automatically disbanded unless a new resolution or decision that expressly sets out its continuation can be put in place. We would also suggest that such extension of a subgroup or working group needs to have a “learning loop” within the draft resolution requesting its extension that sets out an assessment of:

i. What worked well within the subgroup/working group?
ii. What worked less well, and why?
iii. How will the subgroup/working group improve going forward?

This will provide continuous clarity and efficiency for any subgroups or working groups that exist at any time. An automatic follow-up within the “learning loop” will cause contributions to substantive content of resolutions to be enhanced as reports have to be provided and closed for each COP.

Specific MEA feedback: Most of the MEAs responded that they have procedures whereby an ad hoc working group is only created during the period between COPs/GAs and needs to be specifically extended in a draft resolution to be able to continue in existence. None of the MEAs responded that the process was introduced due to a specific challenge, but all noted how much more efficient the work is for the secretariats to keep track of activities and tasks to be completed between each COP.

Feasibility

To implement this measure, Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure would need to be amended to expressly set out the need for a fixed timeline for the non-permanent subgroup/working group’s existence, or to include a blanket rule that all non-permanent subgroups/working groups are dissolved at the next COP meeting. This is a short-term implementation that can be implemented at COP 14, in conjunction with the proposed draft resolution for the Rules of Procedure that is presented at each COP meeting.

A new, separate Rules of Procedure for the Standing Committee can be put forward to the COP 14 in conjunction with other changes to the current Rules of Procedure. We understand that this would require more staff time of the Secretariat to prepare the draft Resolutions for the new Rules of procedure.

Measure #3

This measure addresses the timeline of the STRP workplan priorities and appointment of its members for both to be completed/adopted at COP or immediately after. SRI Executive suggests that the timing and sequence for ultimately approving the STRP workplan and appointing its members, as set out in SC48.18 is carried so that approval can takes place immediately after the COP meeting.

This means that Stage 1, section 42 should also include a draft workplan (Stage 4) at a general level, as there would have been consultation with the Secretariat and Standing Committee (CPs’ regional representative). Based on this, the Secretariat can initiate a process for nominations for experts from CPs prior to the COP meeting and the MWG would meet immediately after the COP, appoint the members, giving their report to the SC meeting that takes place immediately after the COP (Stage 3).
It is recognised that the STRP’s membership and workplan are built on the priorities set by the CPs at the COP (Stage 2). However, the thematic priorities decided at the COP are drawn from the issues and topics which are raised by CPs through the discussion of draft resolutions at Stage 1, as well as interactions with the STRP throughout a triennium. It is therefore proposed that the second SC meeting of the triennium can begin to discuss and indicate overall strategic priorities/themes for the following triennium together with the STRP in a draft format based on an initial analysis provided by the STRP. It is proposed that the STRP review the initial draft of priorities during their meeting prior to the last SC committee of the triennium, including possible relevant draft resolutions as indicative of further priorities (if any) and thereby be able to also provide a high-level draft workplan.

The SC meeting prior to the COP would review the STRP draft workplan and therefore receive comments from CPs in that review. The resulting workplan will be discussed/endorsed by the SC and submitted to the COP where the CPs can further debate, negotiate and adopt.

It is proposed that a selection process for members can be started after the last SC meeting prior to the COP. A relevant list of candidates can be prepared for the COP meeting based on the STRP draft workplan priorities and resolution(s) indicated as priorities (if any). Once the workplan is debated/adopted by COP, the MWG can appoint the most appropriate STRP members during the SC meeting immediately after the COP meeting.

In essence, SRI Executive propose that the COP be presented a new STRP Package that consists of the STRP Draft Resolution that contains priority themes, workplan and list of nominations), which CPs have reviewed through the SC and pre-COP reviews, with final debate and decision at the COP, as well as subsequent implementation decisions by the post-COP SC. This would ensure that the basic framework for the STRP (members and workplan – Stages 1, 3, 4 and 5) are in place immediately after a COP meeting (Stage 2), and the STRP would have the full 3-year period between COPs to carry out the work it has been asked to do by the CPs (Stage 6). In addition, this would ensure that all CPs are able to consider and debate the STRP draft workplan at the COP meeting.

Specific MEA feedback: None of the MEAs noted a significant challenge in relation to the work of their Scientific Committees. It should be noted that the operational model for scientific input is not the same throughout the MEAs reviewed. In the review, SRI Executive noted that the description of the appointment process and workplan approval for scientific committees was finalised during a COP or GA meeting.

Feasibility

To implement this measure, short-term sequencing adjustments need to be agreed within the MWG to move its tasks of appointing members of the STRP and to support the preparation of allocating funds to the STRP workplan so that these tasks can be finalised at the SC meeting immediately after the COP. In addition, we believe that extra support from the Secretariat to prepare the STRP workplan would need to be provided. As this measure also requires more behavioural changes rather than specific changes to documentation to be implemented, we assess that it may be a more long-term goal, with a smooth procedure being established over the next triennium, to be further cemented after COP 15.

Measure #4

SRI Executive notes that there is no simple measure to ensure a change in the level of support from the Ramsar Secretariat to the CPs as this is very much reliant on the resources (technical skills, human resources, time, finances) available. We do however feel that the EWG should explore the following options:
• Consider using a digital service/tool for all documentation preparation and meeting reporting from the COP and SC meetings (e.g. using IISD or commercial tools for conference and meeting management. We note this is a suggestion to scope possible different solutions).
• Explore further support from IUCN in relation to administration of governance procedures (e.g. using IUCN’s system for drafting resolutions/motions. We note this is a suggestion to scope possible different solutions).
• In the event the digital service/tool is not adopted as set out in the first bullet point, provide for an online platform (e.g. Share-point/Drop-Box) dedicated to sharing and collectively editing draft resolutions.
• Strengthen capacity building tools (virtual workshops/training material) with a dedicated Communication Strategy for communication of governance work between COPs.

Specific MEA feedback: In the MEA Comparison Review, Finding 4.1 noted that the MEAs that have strong support from their host institutions, while Finding 4.2 that noted strong involvement of secretariats in the review of draft resolutions indicated a more efficient management of governance procedures.

However, it must also be noted that the MEAs reviewed are at times more fully imbedded in their host institutions’ own governance and operational structures (e.g. LC/LP, ITPRGFA) than the Ramsar Convention which operates semi-autonomously from IUCN. It is therefore difficult to assess the extent to which the Ramsar Convention CPs should, or can, increase the support from IUCN or its own secretariat.

Feasibility

The measures set out above are mainly dependent on the ability to provide significantly more financial resources as well as staff time to support the changes proposed. It also requires a decision to dedicate considerably more resources within the Secretariat to support CPs with their input and contribution to governance processes.

8. Proposed next steps

The EWG has been given a mandate by the COP to recommend revisions (as necessary) that further enhance the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, and efficiency of the Ramsar Convention in order to reduce administrative burden and speed up the process to achieve the mission of the Convention and to propose a process to implement its recommendations. To support this, based on the change management approach that SRI Executive uses for all its governance reviews, as well as other organisational development support, the next stage of the process, would be for the EWG to ensure, with SRI support as needed:

1. Understanding of findings and measures proposed in more detail in order not to open these findings and measures to multiple interpretations by the EWG members.
2. Discuss the measures and the feasibility of the options within Ramsar’s own context and feasibility criteria, and
3. Potentially reach an agreement on any recommended measures that the EWG may wish to take forward in its draft Resolution to the COP.

This would enable the EWG to agree on the parameters of the feasibility criteria, looking at Ramsar Convention’s resources in relation to staff skills and time, funding and readiness for change. This in
turn would enable delivery of a roadmap in accordance with EWG/SRI ToR paragraph 9 points vi, vii and viii.

Where necessary, if identified by the EWG, SRI Executive can support with further fact-finding review/investigation within Ramsar and/or with the comparison of the MEAs should more data be needed to support certain proposals.