



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

Ramsar COP11 DOC. 3 Add. 1

Guidance to Contracting Parties for providing their input on COP information documents and COP11 DR4 during COP11 plenary sessions

(See also COP11 DOC. 3 for general guidance on the procedures for the preparation and approval of Resolutions by Contracting Parties at the COP.)

Background

1. At its 42nd meeting the Standing Committee considered issues of ensuring the timely and smooth running of plenary sessions during the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11). The Committee expressed significant concerns that in recent COPs, certain agenda items have led to long periods of plenary interventions from Parties and other delegates which are essentially addressed to information provided in COP Information Papers.
2. Parties will recall that at COP10 this resulted in the COP running out of plenary time for its consideration of one of the Draft Resolutions (concerning the status of Ramsar Sites) and that the COP President at that time had to request textual amendments from some delegations to be provided in writing to the Secretariat.
3. The agenda items which have led to lengthy plenary sessions in recent COPs are those concerning the ‘Report of the Secretary General and overview of the implementation of the Convention at the global level’ and ‘Consideration of the Draft Resolutions and Recommendations submitted by Contracting Parties and the Standing Committee’, especially where the latter concerns the Information Paper ‘Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance’ and the related Draft Resolution on ‘The Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance’. The guidance provided below should be understood to apply, however, to all matters treated in Information Papers for COP11.
4. Contracting Parties and other delegates are reminded that Information Papers for the COP are provided to Parties for their information only and should not be the subject of negotiation during the meeting.

5. In order to facilitate the smooth running of COP11 in this regard, “the Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to draft an advisory note to Parties to guide streamlining their input to COP informational documents (including the Draft Resolution on the status of Ramsar Sites) in order to save time spent on corrections and comments during plenary sessions and, along with the COP Presidency, to structure and facilitate COP plenary sessions to seek to retain a focus on matters of significant policy and substance relevant to the conservation of wetlands during those sessions” (Decision SC42-7).
6. This advice from the Standing Committee, approved through Decision SC43-1, is provided below. In a related Decision (Decision SC43-30), the Standing Committee also approved the process for the preparation and issuing of the COP11 Draft Resolution on “The Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance” (COP11 DR4).
7. In preparing advice to Parties concerning the COP11 DR4 process following the 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat has identified that there was an inconsistency in the timelines for preparation of COP11 DR4 Rev.1 prior to COP and the guidance on that matter approved through Decision SC43-1. In order to ensure consistency in these processes, a minor adjustment has been made to these timelines as set out in paragraph 17 of the guidance below (and this is also provided in the explanatory note to COP11 DR4).
8. Contracting Parties and other COP11 delegates are urged to heed and follow the advice provided by the Standing Committee below on appropriate procedures to be followed during COP11 plenary sessions.

Guidance to Contracting Parties for providing their input on COP information documents during COP plenary sessions

A) Information Papers in general, including the “Report of the Secretary General and overview of the implementation of the Convention at the global level”

9. Parties should limit their interventions during plenary to matters of substance¹ relevant to the agenda items, including matters of substance contained in Information Papers, for example, the Report of the Secretary General.
10. Parties should submit any proposed corrections or amendments concerning factual matters in Information Papers to the Secretariat, in writing (on paper or by e-mail), before or during the COP.

¹ “Matters of substance” can be defined as “matters concerning the merits of a case rather than form or relatively inessential details” (FindLaw Legal Dictionary, <http://dictionary.findlaw.com/definition/matter.html>); “A matter of substance, as distinguished from a matter of form, with respect to pleadings, affidavits, indictments, and other legal instruments, entails the essential sufficiency, validity, or merits of the instrument, as opposed to its method or style” (Legal Dictionary, <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/substance>).

11. The Secretariat will then reflect those proposed corrections and amendments, as appropriate, in updated versions of the Information Papers made available on the Ramsar website following the COP.
- B) The Information Paper on the “Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance”**
12. Parties should not intervene during plenary sessions merely to update, correct or amend information contained in this Information Paper.
 13. Parties should submit any proposed updates, corrections or amendments concerning the status of Ramsar Sites contained in this Information Paper to the Secretariat, in writing (on paper or by e-mail), before or during the COP.
 14. The Secretariat will then reflect these proposed updates, corrections and amendments in a “Rev.1 version” of this Information Paper to be made available on the Ramsar website following the COP.
- C. Draft Resolution on “The Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance” (COP11 DR4)**
15. An “outline” version of this draft Resolution will have been provided to Parties at the time of issuing all COP Draft Resolutions three months before the opening of COP.
 16. The Secretariat will prepare a “Rev.1” of this Draft Resolution, in the three Convention languages, reflecting the up-to-date information provided in the COP Information Paper on the “Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance”, which will be issued to Parties shortly before the opening of the COP.
 17. Parties are requested, once this Draft Resolution Rev.1 has been issued, to submit to the Secretariat, in writing (on paper or by e-mail), any proposed updates, corrections or amendments concerning the status of Ramsar Sites contained in this Draft Resolution (COP11 DR4 Rev1) as soon as possible – either before COP or at the latest during COP prior to the first plenary discussion of the Draft Resolution.
 18. During plenary sessions Parties should refrain from intervening to speak in detail on any updates, corrections or amendments to factual information contained in this Draft Resolution which they have submitted or will submit to the Secretariat, but rather they should intervene only briefly to advise that they have provided, or are providing, such text to the Secretariat, so that this can be recorded in the Conference report, and so that the Secretariat can confirm that it has received all such texts from Parties.
 19. Interventions and negotiations during the COP should be addressed exclusively to the content of the Rev.1 version of this Draft Resolution and not to the content of the supporting Article 8.2 Information Paper.

20. The Secretariat will prepare a “Rev.2” of this Draft Resolution, incorporating all amendments to the text submitted by Parties, for Parties’ further consideration and adoption later in the COP.

D. The role of the COP President/Alternate President concerning these matters during plenary sessions

21. The COP President or Alternate President chairing the plenary session will call a Party or other delegate to order if he/she considers that an intervention consists only of comments on factual matters contained in an Information Paper for the COP.