



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

Procedures for the preparation and approval of decisions by Ramsar Contracting Parties at the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11)

(See also COP11 DOC. 3 Add. 1 for additional advice on appropriate COP processes and plenary interventions concerning COP information papers.)

Introduction

1. This paper provides a briefing for all those involved in the Ramsar Convention’s Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) preparatory processes and for all participants to the COP itself, and particularly for those who will be participating in a Ramsar COP for the first time.
2. It is therefore relevant for:
 - a) those involved in aspects of the preparation of draft decisions for approval by the COP, including members of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Standing Committee, the Ramsar Secretariat, and Contracting Party Administrative Authorities; and
 - b) those participating in, or running, the COP itself, including Contracting Party delegations, non-party country observers, other observers and invited experts, the Ramsar Secretariat, and host country organizers.
3. The briefing covers fourteen commonly-asked questions about different aspects of the procedures in the preparations for and running of the Convention’s meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, in particular concerning the preparation and approval processes for decisions made by Parties at the COP and related aspects of the running of the COP itself.
4. These questions are:
 - 1) What is the COP – and how does it operate?
 - 2) What are COP ‘decisions’ and what is their purpose?
 - 3) What is the structure of a Draft Resolution?

- 4) Who can submit Draft Resolutions to the COP?
- 5) How many Draft Resolutions are submitted to a COP?
- 6) Are there guiding principles for preparing Draft Resolutions?
- 7) What documents are provided to Contracting Parties at COP?
- 8) What are *Ramsar Technical Reports*?
- 9) What are *Scientific & Technical Briefing Notes*?
- 10) What happens after COP documents are approved by the Standing Committee – and when?
- 11) Who can participate in the COP?
- 12) What happens during the COP?
- 13) How are Draft Resolutions negotiated and approved by Contracting Parties at the COP?
- 14) Who can participate in COP negotiations on Draft Resolutions?

1) What is the COP – and how does it operate?

5. The ‘COP’ is formally the “ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)”, or in common usage, the “meeting of the Conference of the Parties”.
6. The Ramsar Convention operates on a triennial cycle, and the COP meets once every three years. The Conference of the Contracting Parties is the decision-making body of the Convention, and the COP meeting is the key process for Parties to assess progress to date and debate and agree decisions and actions for the future implementation of the Convention, including agreeing upon strategic directions and adopting a Convention core budget for the following three years.

2) What are COP ‘decisions’ and what is their purpose?

7. In the Ramsar Convention, ‘decisions’ made by Contracting Parties at a COP are formally called “Resolutions” and “Recommendations”. Their purpose is to agree Convention implementation actions and priorities for the three-year triennium following the COP and beyond. Resolutions cover scientific, technical, policy, procedural and administrative activities under the Convention.
8. In early Ramsar COPs the distinction between Resolutions and Recommendations was that Resolutions were decisions about commitments for future actions by Parties and Ramsar Convention bodies, whereby the COP *resolves* to take action, and Recommendations were decisions requesting or *recommending* action by other organizations and processes.
9. In practice, nearly all decisions made by recent COPs include a mixture of both resolutions and recommendations, and for the past three meetings of the COP all of them have simply been adopted as ‘Resolutions’, with none of them described as ‘Recommendations’.
10. In addition to the adoption of Resolutions, the COP, at its start, also adopts the “Rules of Procedure” for the COP, including, if needed, any amendments proposed to the version of the Rules that was adopted by the most recent previous COP. These amended Rules of

Procedure then apply to the operations of that COP and for the following triennium, until the Rules are re-adopted at the start of the subsequent COP.

11. During the intersessional period between COPs, the Conference of the Parties delegates its decision-making responsibilities to the Convention's Standing Committee (composed of Parties from each Ramsar region, elected by the COP), within the framework of the COP's decisions and priorities. This typically includes issues such as financial matters like approval of annual budget expenditures and accounts, approval of STRP and Secretariat work plans, appointment of Secretaries General, approval of Small Grant Fund projects, selection of Ramsar Award laureates, COP preparations and the study of Draft Resolutions to be brought to the COP potentially for adoption.

3) What is the structure of a Draft Resolution?

12. The Convention uses a standard format for all 'proposals' in the form of Draft Resolutions. The Resolution text itself is in two parts:

First, **preambular paragraphs**. These set the scene and background to the issue addressed by the Draft Resolution, including where appropriate referring to relevant texts of previous Resolutions (or Recommendations) and recognizing related processes underway through other organizations, etc.

This is followed by the **operative paragraphs** of the Resolution. These form the part of the Resolution in which the Contracting Parties approve future implementation activities and who should undertake them. Each operative paragraph starts with an active verb, the type of verb depending on the strength of the decision and who should be undertaking it. Thus, for example, the Conference of the Contracting Parties may "STRONGLY URGE themselves to take action x", or "INSTRUCT the STRP to undertake task y", or "REQUEST another organization to work with the Secretariat on activity z", etc.

13. Some Draft Resolutions also contain one or more **Annexes**. These can be guidance for Parties, for example, on the implementation of the Resolution or they might contain other relevant information. All such Annexes are a formal part of that Draft Resolution and, like the text of the Resolution itself, are subject to negotiation and approval by Contracting Parties at the COP.

4) Who can submit Draft Resolutions to COP?

14. Because the Convention is an intergovernmental treaty, only the Standing Committee or a Contracting Party can submit a 'proposal' – a Draft Resolution (DR) - to the COP; other actors wishing to propose a text must find and work with a sponsoring Party. Draft scientific and technical Resolutions and guidances are prepared by the Convention's Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) and submitted to the Standing Committee for its approval for COP consideration. The Ramsar Secretariat assists the Standing Committee in drafting administrative, policy and procedural Resolutions.
15. All such Draft Resolutions must be approved by the Standing Committee before consideration by the COP. The Standing Committee can decide against submitting a DR and/or its annexes for COP consideration.

16. According to the COP Rules of Procedure, adopted at COP10 (2008) in their present version, any Contracting Party (or Parties) wishing to sponsor a Draft Resolution for the COP must submit the text to the Standing Committee (through the Secretariat) not later than **60 days** before the beginning of the final Standing Committee meeting at which documents can be approved for COP consideration (Rule 5). This allows time for the Secretariat to prepare the document for official distribution to the SC members by the statutory mailing date of 30 days prior to the start of the SC meeting. No Draft Resolutions from Parties submitted after that 60-day cut-off can be considered by the SC for the COP. The Standing Committee may then provide advice on such Draft Resolutions to the Contracting Party(ies) concerned and to the COP.
17. Under the terms of COP8 Resolution VIII.45, any such Draft Resolution with scientific and technical content must also first be transmitted to the STRP for its review, which in turn provides its advice to Standing Committee and COP.
18. There is one other mechanism established in the COP Rules of Procedure for submission of a Draft Resolution. During the COP itself, the Standing Committee (acting as the Conference Committee) may, exceptionally, agree to bring forward an “emergency Draft Resolution” on an unforeseen or emerging issue or an issue arising from discussions at the COP itself. The Conference Committee will not admit such a proposed emergency Draft Resolution that it considers could have been foreseen prior to COP and that should therefore have been submitted through the procedures described above. Resolution IX.23 on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (COP9, 2005) was such an emergency Draft Resolution.

5) How many Draft Resolutions are submitted to a COP?

19. There is no specific rule concerning the number and content of Draft Resolutions to be submitted to a COP. The number of Draft Resolutions presented to each COP had steadily increased over the years, with a record 46 Draft Resolutions being submitted to COP8 (2002). Negotiating on this very large number of different texts was recognized by Contracting Parties at COP8 to be stretching the COP process and capacity to its limits.
20. Contracting Parties at COP8 (in Resolution VIII.45) therefore strongly requested mechanisms to be established for simplifying and streamlining Draft Resolution processes, designed to reduce the number of Draft Resolutions submitted to COP, in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the discussions there. In response, the Secretariat and Standing Committee developed streamlined processes for COP9 which significantly responded to this instruction (33 Resolutions) and COP10 (32 Resolutions). This progressive decrease in the number of Resolutions continues, with just 23 Resolutions being considered by COP11.

6) Are there guiding principles for preparing Draft Resolutions?

21. There are no formally adopted principles for developing Draft Resolutions for COP consideration, but some general pragmatic guidance can be offered, based on previous COP experience. The Standing Committee has endorsed the present advice (Decision SC36-1) and may further consider whether it should propose formalizing such guidance on the preparation of Draft Resolutions.

22. Some Resolutions need to be adopted by every COP since they are essential for the running of the Convention over the following triennium. Perhaps the best example is the Resolution on “Financial and budgetary matters” through which the triennial budget of the Convention is approved. Other Resolutions will be needed when the renewal of a time-limited programme of work adopted by a previous COP is required, such as the Convention’s Strategic Plan, its CEPA programme, and its future scientific and technical priority work.
23. Other Draft Resolutions are a response to requests from previous COPs, or they are ‘optional’ in the sense that, whilst they address important aspects of future implementation of the Convention, they may not have been previously requested through Convention processes.
24. General principles to keep in mind when preparing Draft Resolutions, in order to ensure a streamlined approach to their preparation and COP consideration, include:
 - i) **There should be only one Resolution on each topic.** Where more than one similar Draft Resolution is submitted, the Secretariat and Standing Committee should work with the Parties and others concerned to seek to consolidate the texts into a single Draft Resolution on the topic.
 - ii) Draft Resolutions can be either:
 - a) **global (or at least covering one or more Ramsar region) in their relevance and scope**, i.e., relevant to implementation by many or all Parties;
or
 - b) **a consensus view by the COP from the global perspective on a matter or matters which are less global in scope**, such as endorsement of regional initiatives, calling for cooperation with certain subglobal organizations, advising on problems reported at Ramsar Sites, or thanking the host country. In general, however, separate Draft Resolutions with only single-country or single-site relevance are not appropriate.
 - iii) **A Draft Resolution on the same topic as a Resolution adopted by a previous COP should reflect new developments or additional issues/approaches.** Since the actions called for in previously adopted Resolutions remain active until superseded or rescinded by the decision of a subsequent COP, a Draft Resolution should not just repeat or reaffirm what has been adopted in previous COP Resolutions on the same topic.
 - iv) **For recurring topics for which Draft Resolutions need to be brought to successive COPs, they should be formulated and structured in a consistent manner.**
 - v) **When a new Draft Resolution is proposed on a topic that is the subject of previously adopted Resolutions, during the drafting process all previous such Resolutions should be scrutinised, and:**

- a) where operative paragraphs of these (or entire previous Resolutions) are proposed to be retired, updated or superseded, this should be clearly indicated in the operative paragraphs the new DR; and
 - b) clear cross-referencing should be made (in preambular paragraphs) to relevant sections of previous Resolutions.
- vi) **Draft Resolutions should not mix (and especially not in the same paragraph) actions that are time-limited and actions that are more enduring or open-ended.**
- vii) When drafting a Resolution (and when considering any amendments during the COP), **a cross-check should be undertaken in order to ensure consistency and compatibility between the elements of the Draft Resolution and a) other Draft Resolutions being prepared for and considered by the same COP and b) the Resolutions of previous COPs.**
- viii) **For all scientific/technical-related Draft Resolutions not directly prepared by the STRP, the advice and guidance of the STRP should be sought, and will be transmitted to the Parties concerned, the Standing Committee, and the COP.**
- ix) **For Draft Resolutions submitted by Contracting Parties, joint submission by several Parties especially from different Ramsar regions is better than submission by only one Party, since this signals that there is broad support for such a Resolution.**

7) What documents are provided to Contracting Parties at COP?

25. Several categories of documents are provided to COP participants.

A. *Draft Resolutions*

26. These documents are number coded as 'DRs', so a Draft Resolution for COP11 will have a document code of, for example, 'COP11 DR6'. DRs (and their annexes, if any) are subject to negotiation and adoption by Contracting Parties at the COP.

27. Once adopted by COP, the DRs become formally re-numbered as Resolutions, for example 'Resolution XI.6' (it is established Ramsar practice to use Roman numerals to indicate the COP number in an adopted Resolution).

B. *Information papers*

28. These documents, as the title suggests, are provided for the additional information of Contracting Parties. They are not the subject of any negotiation or adoption by the COP, and they are coded as 'DOCs', for example 'COP11 DOC.5'.

29. Information papers provide a variety of types of additional information for participants at the COP, including background information, rationales, etc., in support of topics that are the subject of a Draft Resolution (DR).

30. Other Information papers provide “Implementation progress reports”, including global implementation in the Secretary General’s report, reports from the Standing Committee and STRP Chairs, and regional implementation reports derived from analysis of the Parties’ National Reports.

C. *COP Rules of Procedure*

31. The ‘Rules of Procedure’ for the operations of the COP are considered and adopted at the start of each COP. These then govern all COP processes and remain in force until the start of the next COP. The current Rules of Procedure as adopted by COP9 are available at: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/key_rules_cop_e.pdf. COP delegates are strongly urged to make themselves familiar with the COP Rules of Procedure.

D. *COP Report*

32. The report of each day’s plenary COP proceedings is drafted by the COP Rapporteur and each day’s draft report is provided to Parties during the COP for their consideration and adoption at the final plenary session (except for the report of the final day of the COP, which by established practice is subsequently approved by the Chair of the Conference Committee, i.e., of the outgoing Standing Committee).
33. The COP Report summarizes interventions made and agreements and disagreements on text of Draft Resolutions, including any political statements made by Parties and reservations to Draft Resolutions entered by Parties. Such statements and reservations are not generally appropriate for inclusion in the Resolutions themselves.

8) *What are Ramsar Technical Reports?*

34. Detailed technical methodological guidance and review reports prepared by the STRP were previously provided to COP as Information Papers. However, this mechanism greatly increased the volume of paper provided to Parties for the COP, and it also meant that following the COP these documents disappeared into the ‘grey literature archive’ of the Convention and were not easy to find.
35. Since many such reports continue to remain useful and important for supporting Convention implementation, such important materials prepared by STRP are now published as peer-reviewed *Ramsar Technical Reports (RTR)* in order to ensure their wider and longer-term accessibility. *RTRs* are published in PDF format in English, as well as in French and Spanish when resources permit.

9) *What are Scientific & Technical Briefing Notes?*

36. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes series, launched in 2012, complements the *Ramsar Technical Reports* series and is designed to share relevant, credible and interesting scientific and technical information on wetlands, such as on emerging or evolving issues, with a broad audience.

37. Briefing Notes are published by the Ramsar Secretariat in English in electronic (PDF) format. When resources permit, they will be published in French and Spanish as well (the other official languages of the Ramsar Convention).
38. Where a *Briefing Note* provides relevant background information to a Draft Resolution being considered by COP, it may also be included as a numbered COP Information Paper, for ease of reference by COP delegates.
39. For more information about the *Briefing Note* series, see *Briefing Note* No. 1 (<http://www.ramsar.org/bn/bn1.pdf>).

10) What happens after COP documents are approved by Standing Committee – and when?

40. After Standing Committee approval, all Draft Resolutions (and any annexes) are copy-edited by the Secretariat and translated into the other two of the three official Convention working languages: English, French, and Spanish.
41. All DRs are posted on the Ramsar Convention website as soon as they are finalized in each language, and all of them must be available for Contracting Parties at least three months prior to the start of the COP, i.e., for COP11 by 5 April 2012. This is to permit sufficient time for Contracting Parties to undertake national consultations and prepare delegation briefings before the COP.
42. Information papers that will not require negotiation and decisions from the COP are intended to be available on the Ramsar website at least one month before the opening of the COP (i.e., by 5 June for COP11), though that is not a strict rule. No papers requiring negotiation at the COP, however, i.e., Draft Resolutions, can be left to this later date. Information papers containing important administrative reports will be posted in the three Ramsar working languages, but other papers that provide additional background on scientific and technical issues under discussion are translated only as resources permit.

11) Who can participate in the COP?

43. The full COP process is open only to the following categories of organizations and people:

A. *Official representatives of Contracting Parties*

44. Each Contracting Party must submit to the Secretariat for scrutiny by the COP Credentials Committee a formal notification containing the names of its official delegates who will be representing that nation and the name of the head of its delegation. This notification must come from the Head of State or Government or the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
45. Only those Contracting Parties whose credentials are fully in order are permitted to participate in all COP processes – for example, to participate in a vote should one be required. A Credentials Committee made up of Parties is established at the COP and produces a list of fully accredited national delegations before any potential voting matters are considered.

B. *Official observers*

46. Under rules 6 & 7 of the COP Rules of Procedure, other organizations whose work is relevant to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and the conservation and wise use of wetlands may participate in the COP as observers. Official observers can include representatives of states which are not Parties to the Convention, UN bodies and agencies, other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and representatives of the private sector, business, etc. Observers are not permitted to vote but may normally otherwise participate.
47. In the non-governmental sector the Convention includes the organizations representing the Major Groups recognized in Agenda 21: a) women; b) children and youth; c) indigenous peoples; d) non-governmental organizations (NGOs); e) local authorities; f) trade unions; g) business and industry; h) the scientific and technological community; and i) farmers.
48. An NGO requesting participation that is not previously known to the Convention and the Secretariat may be requested to furnish further information about its activities in order to confirm whether or not its work is relevant to the Convention and its objectives, before its participation is approved.
49. The Chief Executive Officer of each NGO approved for participation must provide the Secretariat with a letter listing the names of its official delegates and head of delegation.
50. Depending on the amount of space available in the COP plenary hall, a restriction may need to be placed on the size of observer organization delegations permitted entry to the plenary.
51. At the start of the COP, the COP must formally approve the admission of all observers. Observers are admitted unless at least one-third of all Parties present object to the admission of an observer or observers. In discussions in the plenary sessions and contact groups, the chairs of the session may sometimes need to limit the time allowed for interventions from observers.

C. *Invited experts*

52. At the discretion of the Secretary General, additional specific persons may be invited to participate in the COP, for example, to make a keynote presentation to the COP or as experts invited by the STRP to contribute to its work.

D. *Other types of participants*

53. There can be several other categories of participant, whose participation may be limited to access to only certain parts of the COP venue. These can include press representatives, exhibitors manning exhibition hall exhibits, local participants taking part in peripheral meetings and activities, etc.
54. Under established practice:
 - i) all requests for full COP participation are made to the Ramsar Secretariat, through an on-line pre-registration process which is established on the Ramsar website;

- ii) each official country or observer organization participant and delegation is approved to participate by the Secretary General, before the registration is accepted.
55. It is also established practice that local (host country) registrations and other delegate registrations (e.g., for press or exhibitors) are handled by the host country and its local organizers.
56. The COP is **not** a “scientific congress” open to individuals in their personal capacity. Individual scientists and technicians in the fields of work of the Convention, except for those specifically invited to contribute to the agenda, are eligible to participate only as delegates of one of the types of groups mentioned above.

12) What happens during the COP?

57. The **core business** of the COP is negotiating and adopting Resolutions. This is done through two three-hour plenary sessions each day, running from 10h00 to 13h00 and from 15h00 to 18h00.
58. If, during the COP, it becomes clear that more time is needed to complete negotiations, the COP President may extend, or call additional, plenary sessions (with the agreement of the interpreters), in order to complete negotiations satisfactorily.
59. The COP plenaries are sacrosanct! All other activities and events taking place during the COP are secondary to the plenaries. There are many other supporting events and activities during the COP, however, including:
- side events on topics relevant to the COP, organized by participants, with requests for side events made to and approved by the Secretariat in advance;
 - exhibitions and poster displays;
 - receptions, etc.
60. Under the COP Rules of Procedure, the Standing Committee elected by the previous COP, which has been operating throughout the triennium, formally becomes the **Conference Committee** for the duration of the COP.
61. The Conference Committee meets every day of the COP, in the early morning prior to the start of the morning plenary session. Its roles include confirming the plenary agenda for the day (and making proposals for any amendments necessary) and determining any other matters of COP process and procedures necessary to ensure the smooth running of the COP.

13) How are Draft Resolutions negotiated and approved by Contracting Parties at COP?

62. Early in the COP, each DR is introduced in plenary session. If there are no objections, or no changes to the text proposed by a Contracting Party, the COP adopts the Resolution, unamended, at that time, and there is no further discussion of that Resolution.

63. If, however, a Contracting Party objects to the DR or proposes deleting, adding or amending text, consensus for these changes is first sought in the plenary. If consensus is reached, then the Secretariat prepares and makes available a revised DR (e.g., DR6, rev. 1) for formal adoption later in the COP.
64. If there is disagreement over aspects of the text of a DR, then there are several options:
 - a) If only a few Parties disagree, the COP President may request these Parties to undertake **informal discussions** to seek agreement and report back to the plenary.
 - b) If it is understood that further work is needed on the text of the Draft Resolution, the COP President may request that all interested Parties and observers form an **“informal working group”** to consult together to finalize a new draft text.
 - c) If there is significant disagreement on text among a number of Parties, or groups of Parties, the COP President may call for a formal **“contact group”**, requesting one or more Parties to chair it. It is usually not possible to furnish such groups with interpretation.
 - d) For consideration of certain important documents and issues, the Conference Committee may decide to propose to the plenary that one or more **“COP Committees”** should be established. In recent Ramsar COPs, the COP has established a Committee on Finance and Budget and a Committee on the Strategic Plan. Such proposals are considered in the COP plenary under Agenda item VI (Appointment of the Credentials Committee and any other committees).
65. COP Committees and contact groups meet intersessionally during the COP, i.e., in the morning before the plenary starts, over the two-hour lunch break, and in the evening after plenary (sometimes through the night if necessary!). COP Committees and contact groups continue working (often through several sessions) until agreement is reached and reported back to plenary. The Secretariat then prepares a revised DR text for adoption later in plenary.
66. If meeting room space is limited, the meeting room needs for COP Committees and for contact groups established by the COP President take priority over all other meeting room uses, such as side events requested by participants. It is, therefore, essential for the smooth running of the COP process to have a small number of meetings rooms kept free for potential use by COP Committees and contact groups, in addition to those allocated for requested side events and other meetings such as those of regional groups.
67. All such negotiations over the text of Draft Resolutions, such as through COP Committees and contact groups, should be completed three days prior to the end of the COP. This is to allow sufficient time for the Secretariat to prepare revised texts of all DRs and to have them translated, copied, and made available in all three Convention languages.
68. This work is finalized by the Secretariat during the ‘study tour’ or ‘excursion’ day of the COP, such that all the latest revised DR texts are available to Parties for the start of the penultimate day of the COP. During these final two days of the COP, all DRs not yet adopted are re-introduced in plenary in their latest revised form, so that any final

negotiations may be concluded and all DRs adopted (or not adopted) as formal COP Resolutions before the COP closes.

69. If it does not prove possible to reach consensus on the text of a Draft Resolution, two possibilities exist. The Party or Parties or Standing Committee (acting as the Conference Committee) that have submitted the Draft Resolution may decide to withdraw the text from COP consideration. For cases where such a DR is not withdrawn, the Rules of Procedure also include a voting procedure (according to Rule 40, to be invoked only as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted), but in practice throughout the history of the Convention a consensus solution to disagreements over Draft Resolution text has always been found, without the need to invoke the voting procedure.

14) Who can participate in negotiations on Draft Resolutions?

70. Strictly speaking, only Contracting Party representatives on national delegations may negotiate text of Draft Resolutions, but traditionally the Ramsar Convention and its COPs have also welcomed the input and support of COP observers, including NGOs, and especially the five NGOs to which the Convention has afforded International Organization Partner (IOP) status (BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN, Wetlands International, and WWF International).
71. The chair of the plenary session may take interventions from observers, but normally all Contracting Parties that request the floor will be invited to speak first, followed by observer states and observer organizations to the extent that time permits.
72. If an observer proposes a text change to a Draft Resolution, this can only be considered by plenary if it is then supported by at least one Contracting Party and is not opposed by others. In contact groups and COP Committees, the same Rules of Procedure on interventions apply as in plenary sessions.
73. Traditionally, all plenaries, COP Committees and contact groups at Ramsar COPs are open to observers. On occasion, however, the President of the COP or the Conference Committee or the chair of a contact group may decide to close a session to admit only Contracting Parties. Such an exclusion is wholly within the rules of COP operations and cannot be challenged by the observers. Such a closed session might occur if, for example, a particularly sensitive political issue arises, or if observers are behaving in an unwelcome manner and have not respected the President's or chair's request to modify their behaviour.

Further information

74. Further information about the Ramsar COP process and the development and adoption of Draft Resolutions can be found on the Ramsar website (www.ramsar.org) or by inquiry to the Secretariat (ramsar@ramsar.org).