

**“Wetlands: water, life, and culture”  
8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002**

## **Ramsar COP8 DOC. 13**

Agenda item XX

### **Date and venue of the next ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP9)**

**Action requested: This issue will come up for discussion at the last Plenary Session of COP8 on Tuesday 26 November, though it should be the subject of informal consultations previous to that. The Conference should take a decision on the venue of COP9 to be held in 2005 on the basis of invitations to host the meeting that may have been received by then from Contracting Parties.**

1. The Rules of Procedure contained in document Ramsar COP8 DOC. 2 include the following section concerning the place of the meetings of the COP:

#### **PLACE OF MEETINGS**

##### ***Rule 3***

1. The meeting of the Conference of the Parties shall take place in the country chosen by the previous Conference of the Parties on the basis of a formal invitation that should have been issued to this effect by the Head of State or Government or the Cabinet or the Minister of Foreign Affairs of that country. If more than one Party issue an invitation to host the next meeting, and two or more invitations are maintained after informal consultations, the meeting shall decide on the venue of the next meeting by secret ballot.
  2. If no invitation has been received, the meeting shall be held in the country where the Bureau has its seat, unless other appropriate arrangements are made by the Bureau and accepted by the Standing Committee.
2. No invitation has been received by the Bureau as of 15 October 2002. It would be advantageous to receive invitations in advance of COP8, so that Parties could be informed accordingly. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the rules do not prevent Contracting Parties from extending such an invitation at the very last moment, at the COP itself. Contracting Parties wishing to host COP9 should insure that their invitation is issued under the signature of the appropriate authority, as stated in paragraph 1 above.

3. The Ramsar Bureau can make available upon request a document entitled “General Requirements for and Indicative Costs of Holding an Ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention”.
4. An important issue to be taken into account by Contracting Parties wishing to host COP9 is the fact that, contrary to the situation in most other conventions, the Ramsar Bureau budget so far has not included an allocation to cover the expenses incurred by the secretariat in preparing and servicing the meetings of the Conference of the Parties. The proposed budget for 2003-2008 (see document COP8 – DR 27) contains for the first time a budget line No. 9 for this purpose. The cumulative amount that would be allocated over the three years for this expenditure in 2005, when COP9 should be held, is SF 281,364. The total costs incurred by the Bureau are around SF 800,000, which means that, provided that the proposed budget is approved as presented, the host country of COP9 will still have to provide the Bureau with some SF 520,000 for its COP-related expenses.
5. In addition, the host country has to meet the costs of the local facilities to be provided at the venue to cater for a meeting that would have between 1000 and 1500 participants. Local costs incurred by the host government are difficult to predict because all depends upon the facilities that the government may have at its disposal free of charge or at reduced prices, and the local costs of products and services, including personnel.
6. Costa Rica has been the only developing country that has hosted the Ramsar COP. The experience has shown that, while the country has benefited from the generous support of some Contracting Parties and organizations, it was not easy for the Government to obtain the necessary support, in particular in relation to the obligation to cover the costs incurred by the Ramsar Bureau in Switzerland, as described in paragraph 4 above.