



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
28 October-4 November 2008

Resolution X.5

Facilitating the work of the Ramsar Convention and its Secretariat

1. CONFIRMING that the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty deposited with the United Nations and that activities mandated by its Conference of Parties for the implementation of the Convention are activities carried out under the legal authority of an international treaty and its Contracting Parties;
2. NOTING that the Conference of Parties wishes to implement efficient and effective measures to improve the capacity and operation of the Secretariat to support and facilitate the implementation of the Convention and serve the interests of the Contracting Parties, and that it has instructed the Secretary General in Resolution IX.10 (2005) “to engage in a consultative process with appropriate bodies such as IUCN and UNESCO, as well as the government of the host country and other interested organizations and governments, regarding the options, as well as legal and practical implications, for the transformation of the status of the Ramsar Secretariat towards an International Organization or other status whilst still recognizing and maintaining its links with IUCN and the host country”;
3. EXPRESSING appreciation of the key role played by IUCN in the negotiation and conclusion of the Convention and the continuing support it has provided as the organization designated by Article 8 of the Convention to carry out its secretariat functions until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two-thirds of all Contracting Parties;
4. ALSO EXPRESSING appreciation to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for its willingness to engage with the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties and to review the possibility of providing the Ramsar Secretariat;
5. TAKING NOTE with appreciation of the significant work that has been carried out on this matter by the Standing Committee from the 34th to 38th sessions as well as by the Secretariat, which has presented informative reports to COP10 contained in documents COP10 DOC. 20, COP10 DOC. 20 Add.1, and COP10 DOC. 35;
6. RECOGNIZING the urgent need to successfully conclude the consultative process that Resolution IX.10 (2005) instructed the Secretary General to carry out and that a decision on this issue bears no undue delay and should be taken at the latest by the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and

7. WISHING to facilitate the current and future work of the Ramsar Secretariat without further delay;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. CALLS UPON the Secretary-General of the Convention, the Director-General of the IUCN, and the government of Switzerland to continue to work together to resolve the challenges identified in SC DOC 37-2 and other related documents, and any other impediments that the Secretariat faces in carrying out its functions;
9. ASKS the Executive Director of UNEP to use his good offices to facilitate, where possible, the participation of the Ramsar Secretariat staff and other persons who have formal roles under the Ramsar Convention as representatives of an international treaty, at meetings of the governing bodies and secretariats of UNEP and of multilateral environment agreements to which UNEP provides secretariats, when they relate to subject matters within the competence of the Ramsar Convention;
10. REQUESTS that, where necessary, the Secretariat seek the assistance of the Contracting Parties in a timely manner to:
 - a) take appropriate action in intergovernmental processes and organizations of which they are members to secure the participation of Ramsar Secretariat staff and other persons who have formal roles under the Ramsar Convention, designated appropriately as representatives of an international treaty;
 - b) facilitate the work of the Secretariat in their respective countries by expeditiously arranging for the issue of visas and other required support and assistance;
11. CALLS UPON the Contracting Parties to cooperate, as appropriate, with the Secretariat on activities in the area of competence of the Ramsar Convention which are carried out in their respective countries, including those that are carried out in collaboration with intergovernmental organizations, that could advance the objectives and purposes of the Convention;
12. ESTABLISHES an open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group, reporting to the Standing Committee, in accordance with the terms of reference attached in the Annex. The Working Group will evaluate the success of steps already taken and recommend additional ways of improving the current operations of the Secretariat and determine whether the Secretariat should be provided by UNEP. The Standing Committee may authorize the Working Group to consider the alternative possibility of the Secretariat becoming an independent international organization, should this course be recommended by the Working Group on completion of its primary tasks;
13. DIRECTS the Standing Committee to:
 - a) authorize the Secretariat to implement any recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group with which the Standing Committee agrees and which can be given effect without a decision of the Conference of Parties, and
 - b) report to the next Conference of Parties its recommendations on the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Working Group which require a decision by the Conference of Parties.

Annex

Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform: Terms of Reference

Objective

To recommend efficient and effective measures to improve the capacity and operation of the Secretariat to support and facilitate the implementation of the Convention and serve the interests of the Contracting Parties.

Work Required

- 1) Recommend to the Standing Committee immediate actions that may be taken to improve the effectiveness of the Convention, including assessing their costs. These actions should address any issue the Working Group considers relevant for this purpose, including the issues identified in SC DOC. 37-2 (page 3).
- 2) Evaluate the success of steps already taken to improve the operations of the Secretariat, review the progress made under Work Required Number 1, and recommend to the Standing Committee other possible actions that could be taken by the Secretariat to further improve its operations.
- 3) Recommend through approval by the Standing Committee to Contracting Parties and the Conference of the Parties whether the Secretariat should be provided by UNEP or continue to be hosted by IUCN, with the following issues fully addressed:
 - a) The reasons for and benefits of a change in the status quo for the Secretariat and for Contracting Parties
 - b) The costs and consequences for the operation of the Secretariat and its engagement with the Contracting Parties, including
 - i) staffing costs and composition of the Secretariat under the UN system, including any resources that will be provided by UNEP
 - ii) options for possible location of the Secretariat
 - iii) implications for any future budget of the Secretariat, including any transition costs
 - iv) role of the International Organization Partners (IOPs)
 - v) advantages and disadvantages of the institutional context in which the Secretariat would operate
 - c) How this should be implemented, legally and administratively
 - d) Ability to meet the future needs of the Convention
 - e) Opportunities to further improve the implementation of the Convention
 - f) Timeframe for the implementation of any reforms.

Work-plan

At its first meeting, the working group shall develop a detailed work-plan. Following the completion of its report on *Work Required 1* above, the Standing Committee may make

amendments to the content and timeframe for the reports on *Work Required 2* and *Work Required 3* above.

Timeframe

The Working Group should hold its first meeting within three months of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Working Group should report on *Work Required 1* above within six months of its first meeting. If the Working Group considers that any measures may be implemented more quickly than this, it may make an interim report to the Standing Committee.

The Working Group should report on *Work Required 2* and *Work Required 3* above within twelve months of its first meeting.

The Standing Committee may request the Working Group to provide updates of its reports prior to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Composition

The Working Group will comprise at least two members from each Ramsar region. The members shall appoint a chairperson or co-chairs. Members of the Working Group should facilitate sharing of information about the work of the Working Group within their region. The Secretariat should also place any agenda papers and documents agreed by the Working Group on the Secretariat Web site. As meetings will take place in Gland, encouragement is given to participation by Geneva-based representatives of the Contracting Parties to assist in minimizing costs to the Parties.

The Working Group may invite attendance by IUCN and other IOPs, UNEP, and other organizations relevant to the fulfillment of its mandate.

Funding

Members of the Working Group should meet their own costs. The Secretariat should seek extra budgetary contributions from Parties and other interested bodies to assist in meeting any other costs incurred in servicing the Working Group, such as the engagement of a facilitator if the Working Group considers this necessary to progress its work in a timely manner.