Information paper by Austria, with support from other European countries, for consideration at SC 37:

Proposal for

Draft resolution X.x on The Frequency of Ordinary Meetings of the Conference of Parties (COP)

1. Background

1.1 Limits in capacity and budget at Secretariat and member state level.
1.2 Need for better implementation of the Convention in the regions and on national level.
1.3 If COP-resolutions are taken seriously, there is a need for more time to prepare them and to implement them properly at national and regional level.

2. Frequency of COP

2.1 Frequency of COPs shall be extended from 3 to 4 years.
2.2 Formal Regional meetings shall take place between the COPs every 4 years, e.g. mid-way through the 4 year cycle, to review in particular regional implementation level
2.3 Standing Committee meetings continue to take place every year, providing a good opportunity for CPs to meeting on international level constantly.

3. Advantages

3.1 New frequency makes better use of capacity and budget in Secretariat and member states.
3.2 Raises importance of Standing Committee and regional representation of CPs. Adapts character of regional meetings to regional needs.
3.3 Enhances importance of National Ramsar Committees for implementation.
3.4 4-years COP - frequency relieves Secretariat and CPs from serious work burden in the year of the COP (National Reporting, drafting activities,...).
3.5 CPs receive every 2 years an opportunity to attend an international Ramsar meeting - instead of every 3 years as it is now.

4. Implications

4.1 The convention text, Article 6, states that “COP meetings shall be convened on intervals of not more than three years unless the COP decides otherwise.” So a shift to a 4-year COP cycle could be made by adoption of a COP 10 resolution on this matter.
4.2 Strategic Plan could be made for 8 years instead for 6
4.3 Core budget would be adapted for 4 year period