

Decisions of the 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 4: Matters arising from decisions of SC42

Decision SC43-1: The Standing Committee agreed that the “Guidance to Parties for providing input for COP information documents” annexed to DOC. SC43-07, with the proposed amendments and clarification of the meaning of “matters of substance”, should be finalized and made available to Contracting Parties, including as a COP11 Information Paper and specifically drawn to the attention of all Parties and delegates who will participate in the COP.

Agenda item 7: Selection of Ramsar Award/Evian Special Prize laureates

Decision SC43-2: The Standing Committee selected the laureates for the 5th cycle of Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards, out of a field of nominations of high merit. For the award for education, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (USA) was selected; for management, Ms Augusta Henriques (Guinea-Bissau); and for science, Prof Tatsuichi Tsujii (Japan). A special “Recognition of Achievement” will be made to Mr Thymio Papayannis, and one of the Convention’s “founding fathers”, Dr Luc Hoffmann, will be presented with a 40th Anniversary Honorary Ramsar Award.

Agenda item 6: Financial matters – Report of the Subgroup on Finance

Decision SC43-3: The Standing Committee agreed that the Convention should set a minimum Reserve Fund level of 6%, a maximum of 30%, and an ideal level of 15%, and that efforts should be made to reach that ideal level by 2015.

Decision SC43-4: The Standing Committee very strongly urged all Parties with assessed contributions in arrears for 2011, 2010 and earlier to bring all such payments fully up to date as a matter of great urgency, particularly in relation to current core budget financial challenges for 2011 and 2012, and it determined to further discuss this matter.

Decision SC43-5: The Standing Committee decided that Parties in arrears should not be subject to penalties and that such wording should not be reflected in the proposed Draft Resolution on “Adjustments to the roles and composition of the Standing Committee”.

Agenda item 6 bis: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

Decision SC43-6: The Standing Committee encouraged the CEPA Oversight Panel, working with the Secretariat and the STRP, to review, consolidate, and update the Convention’s guidance adopted by Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36 and to bring new or revised guidelines on participatory management as a Draft Resolution for COP12 (2015).

Decision SC43-7: The Standing Committee requested the CEPA Oversight Panel to draft an operative paragraph on identifying capacity building needs of Ramsar Regional Centre staff for inclusion in the COP11 Draft Resolution on “Regional Initiatives”.

Decision SC43-8: In order to streamline the process of replacing members of the CEPA Oversight Panel when necessary, the Standing Committee decided that, if one of the CEPA National Focal Points leaves during the first half of the triennium in which she or he has been elected, the Secretariat should select a replacement based on the nominations received for the triennium without regard to the maintenance of regional balance.

Decision SC43-9: The Standing Committee adopted the Secretariat’s Work Plan for 2012 as presented in DOC. SC43-05.

Agenda item 10: Consideration of proposed Draft Resolutions for COP11

Adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015 at the midterm

Decision SC43-10: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on adjustments to the Strategic Plan, with the proposed amendments, for inclusion in the first tranche of documents for COP11 and instructed the Secretariat to supply an updated version for electronic sign-off including any further proposed adjustments gleaned from the Parties’ National Reports.

Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention

Decision SC43-11: The Standing Committee agreed that an independent assessment to review the operation of the Ramsar Regional Centres in Africa and Asia should be carried out and the results included in an Information Paper to COP11, and, as appropriate, be included in the operative paragraphs of the DR on Regional Initiatives to be debated at COP11. The independent assessment should be funded through voluntary contributions from the Parties and other sources.

Adjustments to the *modus operandi* of the STRP

Decision SC43-12: The Standing Committee agreed to review and adopt a revised version of the Draft Resolution on the *modus operandi* of the STRP in the new year and to invite a working group of interested Parties to define the primary concepts for a new vision document on science and the Convention before the end of the present meeting, for later completion and consideration by COP11 as a separate DR with an Information Paper. [See also Decision SC43-36 below.]

Future scientific and technical priorities

Decision SC43-13: The Standing Committee agreed that the DR on ‘Future scientific and technical priorities’ will be circulated electronically in a revised version, taking into account the SC’s proposals and amendments and following additional discussions in the regional meetings, for the Committee’s adoption for consideration by COP11.

Wetlands and energy issues

Decision SC43-14: The Standing Committee requested the STRP Chair and Secretariat to prepare a revised DR, incorporating the proposed amendments and restructured as a short DR with an annex, and to recirculate it for SC approval for COP11.

Climate change and wetlands

Decision SC43-15: The Standing Committee requested the STRP Chair and Secretariat to prepare a revised DR on climate change and wetlands for circulation for its approval for consideration by COP11.

Agenda item 6: Financial and budgetary matters (continued)

Decision SC43-16: The Standing Committee recognized the financial challenges presented in 2011 stemming from the significant shortfall in income from Contracting Parties compared with that budgeted and approved at SC42, as well as the continued uncertainty regarding exchange rates. The Committee noted the actions taken to reduce expenditures and approved the forecast for 2011, with the proviso that additional expenditures for Regional Initiatives would be considered for support on a case-by-case basis. The Standing Committee recognized that in light of a Reserve Fund balance of only CHF 302,000 at the beginning of 2011, the situation requires firm action now to minimize the likely net deficit for 2011, which the Secretariat forecasts as likely to be ca. CHF 114,000.

Decision SC43-17: The Standing Committee recognized that financial challenges would likely continue in 2012 and approved the 2012 rebudget (annexed to this report) reflecting zero salary increases, an increase of the Reserve Fund of CHF 100,000, a carryover of CHF 121,000 from 2011 Regional Initiative allocations and further 2012 Regional Initiative allocations of CHF 73,000. The Standing Committee requested that efforts to secure alternative, non-Core sources of funding for Regional Initiatives should be stepped up both for 2012 and for 2013-2015.

Decision SC43-18: The Standing Committee recognized the challenging target of CHF 900,000 for sponsoring delegates to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and requested that the Secretariat and Parties make this a priority for voluntary funding for the coming year.

Decision SC43-19: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to continue to seek alternative sources of financing for the Small Grants Fund; encouraged Parties and other potential donors to demonstrate their desire to keep the SGF operational by making significant voluntary contributions to the Fund; and instructed the Secretariat not to solicit or assess any SGF proposals for the 2013 cycle and to continue to seek further funds for the 2010 and 2011 portfolio of projects.

Decision SC43-20: The Standing Committee decided that two 2013-2015 budget scenarios should be provided to COP11, one that reflects no growth and no inflation and keeps total contributions from Parties at their COP10 budgeted level for 2012, and a second 2% contribution increase version to build in expected local inflation. Both versions should also include budgeted increases to the Reserve Fund of CHF 160,000 per annum in an attempt to get to the ideal 15% level by the end of 2015.

Decision SC43-21: The Standing Committee noted that a number of items had been identified by the Secretariat and Contracting Parties as providing potential opportunities for cost savings in

2013-2015 budget scenarios, including Regional Initiatives, STRP Chair's stipend, STRP core contribution to projects, CEPA/ communications activities, travel, and legal support, and requested the Secretariat to focus on these items in particular when developing its revised budget scenarios for Contracting Parties consideration.

Decision SC43-22: The Standing Committee requested that the Secretariat and Chair of the SubGroup on Finance prepare an Information Paper for COP11 setting out the basis, rationale and implications for Convention implementation of each of the two scenarios and that each of the scenarios presented to the COP should include the projected contributions by Party.

Agenda item 10: Consideration of proposed Draft Resolutions for COP11 (continued)

Integrated framework for wetland conservation and poverty eradication

Decision SC43-23: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on poverty reduction (DOC. SC43-22), as amended, for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Integrated framework for avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses

Decision SC43-24: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses (DOC. SC43-23) for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Principles for urban planning and wetlands

Decision SC43-25: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on urban planning and wetlands (DOC. SC43-24) for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Wetlands and health

Decision SC43-26: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on wetlands and health (DOC. SC43-25), with a strengthened section on communications, for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Rice paddy, wetlands and pesticides

Decision SC43-27: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on rice paddies and pesticides (DOC. SC43-26), as amended, for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Tourism and wetlands

Decision SC43-28: The Standing Committee approved the Draft Resolution on tourism and wetlands (DOC. SC43-27), as amended, for posting on the wiki site for review and approval for COP11 consideration.

Responsible investment by government, submitted by Switzerland

Decision SC43-29: The Standing Committee welcomed the Draft Resolution on responsible investment (DOC. SC43-28) and invited Switzerland to take the proposed amendments on board and provide an updated version.

Status of Ramsar Sites

Decision SC43-30: The Standing Committee noted the information and model Draft Resolution in DOC. SC43-29 on the status of Ramsar Sites, agreed to provide the Secretariat with any further updates prior to 2 June, and endorsed the Secretariat's intention to issue a revised Draft Resolution just before the opening of the COP.

Wetlands and sustainable development (the Tehran Declaration), submitted by Islamic Republic of Iran

Decision SC43-31: The Standing Committee welcomed the Draft Resolution on wetlands and sustainable development (DOC. SC43-31) for transmittal to the COP for its consideration.

DOCs. SC43-30, Conservation of Mediterranean Basin island wetlands, submitted by Greece, and SC43-32, Guidance on the application of methods for determining water requirements of wetlands, submitted by Spain

Decision SC43-32: The Standing Committee recognized the importance of adhering to the Rules of Procedure and urged all Parties to observe those deadlines in submitting Draft Resolutions to future COPs. The Committee invited Spain and Greece to consult with Chair of the STRP about how the materials could be integrated into ongoing work outside of the time constraints of COP11, and urged Greece to consider discussing the elements of its DR with the CBD in its review of its programme of work on island biodiversity.

DOC. SC43-33, High-level ministerial segments at COPs, submitted by Uganda

Decision SC43-33: The Standing Committee declined to transmit the Draft Resolution on high-level ministerial segments to the COP but requested the Secretariat to look into incorporating a section of advice on this matter, noting the value of such segments when considered on a case-by-case basis, into the generic information for potential hosts of the Conference of the Parties.

Agenda item 9: the Secretariat's hosting arrangements (continued)

Decision SC43-34: The Standing Committee determined to transmit to COP11 the two Draft Resolutions contained in DOC. SC43-13 Rev. 1, as amended, and to request the Ad Hoc Working Group to work with an independent consultant engaged by the Secretariat with funds provided by Australia to prepare by the end of January 2012 an information paper based on existing information to facilitate the decision of COP11.

Strategic Framework for Ramsar Partnerships (continued)

Decision SC43-35: The Standing Committee, recalling the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Coordinator (DOC. SC41-19 annex), requested the Secretary General and the Secretariat to undertake further work on and revise the Strategic Framework for Ramsar Partnerships as presented in DOC. SC43-09, particularly in order:

- a) to provide further analysis of all existing partnerships, including those with donors, and to list gaps in the current situation;
- b) in cooperation with the STRP, the IOPs, and Regional Initiatives, as well as National Focal Points, to identify potential global, regional, and national donors and to prepare tailor-made products and projects for them;
- c) to report on a regular basis to the Subgroup on Finance on the progress of the work on partnerships and synergies with other relevant processes and organizations, including, *inter alia*, other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and United Nations agencies and organizations, following the structure of the above-mentioned Terms of Reference;
- d) to elaborate a first draft work plan for the Partnership Coordinator with a roadmap and clear indicators of success until May 2012, taking into account fundraising as a priority, with particular emphasis on Regional Initiatives, the SGF, and the STRP; and
- e) to offer training possibilities and tools on fundraising to each region over the next triennium;

established a support group composed of interested Contracting Parties and IOPs to work with the Secretariat on the above points and to meet together with Contracting Parties on the occasion of COP11; and invited interested Parties to inform the Secretariat of their wish to participate in that group.

Draft Resolution on delivery of scientific and technical advice for the Convention

Decision SC43-36: The Standing Committee invited the STRP Chair, the USA, Denmark, and the Secretariat, and any other interested Parties, to prepare a Draft Resolution based upon the elements articulated in the paper annexed to the report and decisions of this meeting, and to post it on the wiki site for comment and amendments and transmission to COP11 for consideration. [See also Decision SC43-12 above.]

Agenda item 11: Proposed amendments to the COP Rules of the Procedure

Decision SC43-37: The Standing Committee approved the proposed amendments to the COP Rules of Procedure in principle, for transmission to the COP, subject to further discussions between the USA and the Deputy Secretary General about their precise wording.

Agenda item 12: Date and venue of the next meeting

The SC Chair noted that the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee will take place in Bucharest on Sunday, 17 June 2012 [subsequently amended to Wednesday, 4 July 2012].

Annex 1

Draft Resolution: Ensuring efficient, effective delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention

The DR will be supported by an information paper prepared through the small working group which was established after SC42.

Elements of the proposed DR:

1. Establish a small review committee consisting of volunteer members of the SC and any other interested Parties. The committee may be overseen by a Party which volunteers to do so.
2. The committee may consult with relevant entities, including the STRP Chair, Secretariat staff, national focal points, Ramsar site managers, other wetland managers, IOPs and representatives of other bodies associated with Ramsar such as biodiversity-related MEAs who can offer advice and guidance.
3. Recommendations of the review committee will be submitted to the SC for consideration prior to COP12. Recommendations will include suggestions for mechanisms within the Convention to implement changes which may be agreed.
4. The committee will address, *inter alia*:
 - Review of the full processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, and converted into tools for the range of on-the-ground stakeholders, including those processes which involve adoption of scientific and technical Resolutions by the COP as well as other processes within the Convention;
 - Review of the roles of relevant entities within the Convention for scientific support and delivery to stakeholders, including the roles of STRP, the Secretariat, the national focal points and the regional initiatives, giving special attention to finding ways to ensure that scientific and technical products effectively support Convention implementation;
 - Exploration of possible refinements or changes to relevant Convention processes to facilitate effective communications between all those entities involved in scientific support and delivery. This could include changes to Resolution processes, the STRP modus operandi, and the focal point system;
 - Development of measures to track and assess the effectiveness of the scientific support and delivery processes within the Convention, across the various entities responsible;
 - Suggestions for a future vision, direction and objectives for maintaining the strong practical science base on which Ramsar has always been founded.

Annex 2

2012 Rebudget (Decision SC43-17)
See PDF