

Decisions of the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the Agenda

Decision SC46-01: The Standing Committee adopted the agenda, as amended.

Agenda item 3: Admission of Observers

Decision SC46-02: The SC decided to admit the following observers to the session: UNEP (two representatives) and the representatives of the Ramsar Regional Centres for East Asia and for Central & West Asia.

Agenda item 4: Matters arising from Decisions of the 44th and 45th meetings of Standing Committee

Decision SC46-03: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to submit relevant assessment reports such as the TEEB water and wetlands report to the IPBES catalogue of assessments; and further requested both bodies to initiate the preparation of the interim guidelines requested by COP11 in Resolution XI.6 and to circulate these guidelines electronically for Standing Committee approval.

Agenda item 5: Matters arising from COP11 Resolutions

Decision SC46-04: The Standing Committee noted the report on matters arising for the Standing Committee from the Resolutions adopted by COP11 (DOC. SC46-04) and confirmed that the items on the agenda of the current meeting responded to all the tasks requested by COP11.

Decision SC46-05: The Standing Committee welcomed the offer of the Republic of Korea to host a workshop on potential wetland city accreditation mechanisms. The Standing Committee also encouraged the Secretariat to gather and disseminate information on comparable initiatives and, within the limits of available resources, to work with interested Contracting Parties on the further development of the accreditation initiative and approach.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Secretary General

Decision SC46-06: The Standing Committee expressed appreciation to the Secretary General for his contribution to advancing the work of the Ramsar Convention during his six-year tenure and took note of the Secretary General's detailed and comprehensive report.

Agenda item 21: COP12: Report on preparations

Decision SC46-07: The Standing Committee took note of the report, and urged the Secretariat to continue working with Uruguay to finalize and sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

Agenda item 22: Establishment of a Standing Committee Subgroup on COP12

Decision SC46-08: The Standing Committee agreed to establish a subgroup on the preparation of COP12. The membership of the Subgroup would comprise one member of the Standing Committee from each region, with the host country, Uruguay, as Chair. Members are: COP12 host country, Uruguay (Chair), Cambodia, Fiji, France, Guatemala, Mexico, South Africa, and Romania (COP11 host country).

Agenda item 7: Secretariat Work Plan 2013

Decision SC46-09: The Standing Committee adopted the Secretariat's work plan for 2013 as the basis of its programme of work, noting that it could be modified in line with the comments made by members of the Standing Committee and with the approval of the Executive Team (the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance) and further noting the need to allow for flexibility pending its review by the incoming Secretary General later in 2013.

Agenda item 8: Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat: follow up to Resolution XI.1

Decision SC46-10: The Standing Committee welcomed and noted the suggestions of the Ramsar Secretariat and IUCN about ways and means of implementing the terms of Resolution XI.1 on the institutional hosting of the Secretariat, and requested that progress be reported to the Standing Committee at its 47th meeting through the Management Working Group.

Agenda item 9: Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2016 onwards

Decision SC46-11: The Standing Committee established a Strategic Plan Working Group, to include Contracting Parties, STRP, the CEPA Oversight Panel, International Organization Partners, Regional Initiatives and other Ramsar stakeholders, in order to take forward the preparation of the 4th Strategic Plan.

Agenda item 10: Governance, planning and funding of activities on culture and wetlands in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Decision SC46-12: The Standing Committee welcomed the work of the Culture Working Group and encouraged it to continue its work and to report progress to the Standing Committee at its 47th meeting; called for the Culture Working Group's contribution to the Secretariat's work to be appropriately reflected in the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan, for 2016 onwards; and requested the Culture Working Group to take into account and cooperate with the development of a wetlands cities accreditation mechanism referred to in Decision SC46-05.

Agenda Item 11: Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention (Resolution XI.5)

Decision SC46-13: The Standing Committee

- i) endorsed the 15 Regional Initiatives listed in DOC. SC46-11 as meeting the Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and within the framework of the Convention during 2013;

- ii) noting the shortcomings and priority areas for action identified in the annual reports of the Regional Initiatives, requested the Regional Initiatives to report, through the Secretariat, on the remedial steps they had taken to the Standing Committee at its 47th meeting.

(See also Decisions SC46-23 and SC46-28 concerning the allocation of core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for 2013, and the revised Operational Guidelines for 2013-2015.)

Agenda item 16: Scientific and Technical Review Panel: Report of the STRP Chair and draft STRP 2013-2015 Work Plan

Decision SC46-14: The Standing Committee

- i) noted the report of the Chair of STRP and welcomed the Terms of Reference for STRP Members, Invited Experts and Observer Organization Representatives, requesting the Secretariat to prepare a compilation of the existing *modus operandi* and the new Terms of Reference for COP12 consideration;
- ii) endorsed the STRP's recommendations concerning the Ramsar Information Sheet (2012 revision), namely that its format should be retained with no additional subfields to be added at this time;
- iii) approved the STRP 2013-2015 Work Plan for finalization;
- iv) endorsed the proposals for the highest priority tasks for attention (as listed in DOC. SC46-16, paragraph 17), with the addition of the preparation of a report on the state of the world's wetlands; and
- v) urged Contracting Parties and other partners and donors to provide, through voluntary contributions, the resources needed to enable the completion of these tasks.

Agenda item 8: Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat: follow up to Resolution XI.1

Decision SC46-15: The Standing Committee, having considered the feedback from regional groups on the composition of subgroups that will follow up Resolution XI.1 paragraph 17 on administrative reform, decided on the following Subgroups, and their membership and chairs:

- i) Subgroup 1, on accommodation of United Nations languages into the Ramsar Convention: Africa - Tunisia; Asia - United Arab Emirates (Chair), with China and Japan as observers; Europe - Denmark; Neotropics - Guatemala and Ecuador; North America - United States of America; and Oceania – Australia, with Fiji after the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee;
- ii) Subgroup 2, on elevating the visibility and stature of the Ramsar Convention: Africa - South Africa; Asia - Thailand; Europe - Denmark and Switzerland; Neotropics - Cuba and Guatemala; North America - Mexico; and Oceania – Australia, with Fiji after the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee;
- iii) Subgroup 3 on enhancing synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international entities: Africa - Burundi; Asia - Islamic Republic of Iran, with China and Japan as observers; Europe - Denmark and Finland; Neotropics - Cuba and Guatemala; North America - United States of America; and Oceania – Australia, with Fiji after the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 17: Update on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Decision SC46-16: The Standing Committee noted the report by the Secretariat and welcomed the information provided by Contracting Parties about further designated Ramsar Sites and progress made on other issues related to Ramsar Sites.

Decision SC46-17: The Standing Committee noted the approach and welcomed the progress made so far in the redevelopment of the Ramsar Sites Information Service.

Agenda item 18: Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel

Decision SC46-18: The Standing Committee endorsed the composition of the CEPA Oversight Panel as set out in DOC. SC46-18, and approved the Panel's Work Plan for 2013-2015 as contained in Annex 2 of that document.

Agenda item 19: World Wetlands Day themes for 2014 and 2015

Decision SC46-19: The Standing Committee endorsed the theme of "wetlands and agriculture" for World Wetlands Day for 2014. For World Wetlands Day 2015, it recommended that the theme should be complementary with that of COP12 on the broad theme of "wetlands and biodiversity", and requested progress to be reported at its 47th meeting.

Agenda item 20: New Ramsar website

Decision SC46-20: The Standing Committee welcomed the progress that had been made to date and thanked the project leaders for restructuring and redesigning the Ramsar Convention's website.

Agenda item 23: National Report Format for COP12

Decision SC46-21: The Standing Committee approved the COP12 National Report format as presented in DOC.SC46-21; requested the Secretariat to finalize and distribute the format to Contracting Parties by mid-2013; and confirmed that the deadline for submission of completed reports to the Secretariat would be at nine months before the beginning of COP12, provisionally September 2014 pending the dates of the COP being confirmed.

Agenda item 22a: Report of the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP12

Decision SC46-22: The Standing Committee

- i) reiterated its thanks to Uruguay for offering to host COP12; noted with appreciation the progress reported by the Host Country; requested the Host Country and the Secretariat to consider carefully the length and scheduling of COP12, in particular in relation to participation by one-person delegations; and requested the Secretariat to prepare a list of anticipated draft COP12 Resolutions, with the aim of reducing the number to be submitted to COP12; and
- ii) recognized the concerns and challenges due to the lack of a Ramsar core budget allocation for the preparation and running of a COP; urged the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP12 and the Secretariat to resolve the issues of funding; and also

urged the Host Country and the Secretariat to continue their negotiations and finalize the hosting agreement, and to report intersessionally to the Standing Committee Subgroup on COP12 on progress made.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Subgroup on Finance

Decision SC46-23: The Standing Committee

- i) approved the audited final 2012 financial statements, subject to finalization of the audit, noting the healthy Reserve Fund balance of CHF 812,000 at the beginning of the triennium 2013-2015; and urged the Secretary General to ensure that all staff take their allocated annual leave, so as to minimize any future financial liability;
- ii) decided that there would be no change to the core budget allocations for 2013 approved by COP11 Resolution XI.2;
- iii) decided that the forecast savings of CHF 326,000 be used to fund the prioritized COP-approved non-core budget items immediately and at a later date in 2013, as follows:
 - a) CHF 163,000 to be reallocated immediately to:
 - Science review (Resolution XI.16): CHF 80,000 (from reserve fund excess at 31 December 2012);
 - Ramsar Sites Information Service redevelopment: CHF 53,000 (from 2013 line items);
 - Preparation of new Strategic Plan: CHF 30,000 (from 2013 line items); and
 - b) CHF 163,000 to be reallocated later in 2013, at the discretion of the Secretary General, to fund the following non-Core priorities, in no particular order:
 - Ramsar Advisory Missions (non-Core 2013 budget is CHF 150,000);
 - Scientific and technical services (non-Core 2013 budget is CHF 635,000);
 - Ramsar Sites Information Service redevelopment (balance of 2013 non-Core budget);
 - Preparation of new Strategic Plan (balance of 2013 non-Core budget);
- iv) decided that there would be no change to the non-core budget allocations for 2013 as approved by COP11 Resolution XI.2 (noting that the non-core budget list in Resolution XI.2, Annex III was not ranked in any order of priority);
- v) decided to allocate from the Ramsar core budget 2013, line D. Support to Regional Initiative networks and centres (Resolution XI.2, Annex I), a total of CHF 129,719 to the following six Regional Initiatives, as requested for their activities in 2013:

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| – East African centre | CHF 35,000 |
| – Niger river basin network | CHF 30,000 |
| – La Plata river basin network | CHF 16,700 |
| – Caribbean network | CHF 15,000 |
| – American mangroves and reefs network | CHF 20,000 |
| – Carpathian Wetland Initiative | CHF 13,019 |

- vi) decided that the Terms of Reference for a new Partnership Coordinator should specify clearly the expectation to raise funds;
- vii) agreed not to formally re-launch the Small Grants Fund for 2014; but requested the Secretariat to review the status of current Small Grants Funds portfolio and seek ways of refreshing it, pending further review and redevelopment of mechanisms for funding small projects of national priority (in relation to the terms of Resolution XI.2 and the finalization of the Strategic Framework for Ramsar Partnerships), for consideration by the Standing Committee; and
- viii) noted the current status of Contracting Parties' outstanding annual contributions (DOC.SC46-13); and encouraged the Secretariat, working with members of the Subgroup on Finance, to continue to take actions to resolve this situation.

Agenda item 13: Report of the Management Working Group

Decision SC46-24: The Standing Committee

- i) decided that the Management Working Group would act as the umbrella group responsible for coordinating the operational processes for work on the issues raised in Resolutions XI.1 and XI.16, and to ensure reporting on progress on these issues to the Standing Committee at its 47th meeting and to COP12; and
- ii) requested the Secretariat to progress the negotiations between the Ramsar Secretariat and IUCN on improving operations by establishing a small task force (with three members from each organisation) on administrative, financial and scientific and technical issues; recommended that that task force pursues these matters with the involvement of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee, the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and the Chair of the STRP; and requested that the task force reports on progress to the Standing Committee at its 47th meeting;

Decision SC46-25: The Standing Committee confirmed the establishment of the review committee on the delivery of scientific and technical advice (Resolution XI.16), with the United States of America as the lead Party, regional representation of other Parties, the STRP Chair and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance; and requested that its terms of reference, once finalized, be provided to the Secretariat for posting with other relevant documents on the Ramsar website.

Agenda item 9: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

Decision SC46-26: The Standing Committee noted the progress reported by the Strategic Plan Working Group.

Agenda item 8: Report of the Resolution XI.1 Subgroup 1 on Languages

Decision SC46-27: The Standing Committee noted the report of the Subgroup 1 on Languages.

Agenda item 11: Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention (Resolution XI.5): revised Operational Guidelines

Decision SC46-28: The Standing Committee endorsed the revised Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives, and requested the Secretariat to finalise and issue the guidelines taking into account any further amendments received from Parties.

Agenda item 24: Date and venue of the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee

Decision SC46-29: The Standing Committee decided that the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee would be held in Gland, Switzerland, on 24-28 March 2014, with possible alternative dates of 31 March - 4 April 2014.