

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

24th Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 29 November – 2 December 1999

DOC. SC24-5

Agenda item 7.3

Staffing issues, including

- i. New staff chart
- ii. Secretary General's contract
- iii. Establishment of Development Assistance Officer post

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested: a) to note the new staff chart; b) to take a decision on the offer of the Secretary General to extend his contract for a further and final three-year period; and c) to take a decision on the proposal to establish a core-funded post of Development Assistance Officer.

i. New staff chart

1. The new staff chart has been included in the proposed Ramsar Bureau Work Plan for 2000 (document SC24-3, page 2). The chart shows two changes of staff functions in the Administration and Fundraising Team, where the posts of Administrator and of Small Grant Fund Officer have been abolished and replaced by two new posts: Project Administration Officer, now held by Julia Tucker (previously Administrator), and Administration Coordinator, held by Annette Keller (previously Small Grants Fund Officer). All other positions remained unchanged.

ii. Secretary General's contract

2. In view of the fact that his current contract, in practice, comes to an end on 31 July 2000, the Secretary General has written to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee (with copy to all voting members of the Committee) offering his service for a further, and final period of three years. A copy of the letter is attached as Annex 1. The Standing Committee needs to take a decision on this matter: either to accept the incumbent's offer to continue serving, or to initiate the process to recruit his replacement.

iii. Establishment of a Development Assistance Officer post

3. The Standing Committee must take a decision on this issue, on the basis of the advice provided by the Subgroup on Finance. The background to this issue and the terms of reference for the post can be found in document SC24-19, section ii).

Annex 1

Mr. Stephen Hunter
Head

Biodiversity Group
Environment Australia
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

22 October 1999

Dear Stephen,

Subject: The position of Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands to address the question of the position of Secretary General of the Convention, which I have the honour to hold at present.

Let me first describe the current situation. In the letter of appointment addressed to me on 21 June 1995, it was stated that the starting date of my contract as Secretary General was 1 August 1995 and the end of contract was 31 August 1997. In addition, under section 6 of the terms of appointment on "Conditions of Renewal" it was stated that:

"The terms of contract will be renewable for three years from 31 August 1997 (i.e. to 31 August 2000) with the agreement of yourself, the Ramsar Standing Committee and the Director General of IUCN acting on the advice of the Standing Committee. Exceptionally, a further three-year term may be considered with the agreement of all three parties named above."

On the basis of this clause, the Standing Committee at its 19th meeting held on 29 October – 1 November 1996 adopted Decision 19.13 which reads: "The renewal of the contract for Mr Delmar Blasco as Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention for the period 1 August 1997 to 31 July 2000 has been recommended for approval by the IUCN Director General." (It should be noted that in the original contract the end of contract should have been 31 July 1997, and not 31 August 1997.)

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Subsequent to this decision of the Standing Committee, a particular development occurred in IUCN, the legal persona of the Ramsar Bureau and, thus, the legal employer of all Ramsar Bureau staff. At the request of the Staff Liaison Committee, IUCN sought legal advice concerning some of its employment practices that might not have been fully in line with Swiss labour law. (IUCN, having, so far, the status in Switzerland of a non-governmental organization, is required to follow Swiss labour laws.) One of the issues upon which the lawyers were consulted was the question of fixed-term contracts. The advice of the lawyers was that according to Swiss law, when a contract has been renewed once, it becomes a permanent contract. IUCN

has since applied this advice to all contracts, and thus, my present contract, legally speaking, no longer has a date of expiry.

Nevertheless, I have decided that in practice I will continue to consider that my present contract is coming to an end on 31 July 2000. Consequently, the Standing Committee needs to address this matter at its forthcoming meeting on 29 November – 2 December 1999, as indicated in item 7.3.2 of the Draft Agenda for the meeting.

I have reflected with great care on whether I should offer my services to the Standing Committee for a final period of three years, i.e. to 31 July 2003, as permitted in the clause concerning the conditions of renewal in my original contract, as cited above. I have concluded that I would like to make this offer to the Standing Committee. I have come to this conclusion on the basis of two main considerations: a) I feel that I am keeping intact the enthusiasm I came with to serve the Convention, and thus I am prepared to continue to serve with the same energy and drive that I have so far; and b) I would like to contribute to the completion at COP8 in 2002 of the cycle of transformation and growth that the Convention has been going through.

In addition, I have also taken into account that my familiarity with the language, culture and institutional arrangements of the host country of COP8, Spain, would also be beneficial to the Convention, and at the same time it will be a pleasure for me to work with Spain in the preparations of the next COP.

In summary, I am in your hands. I will be honoured to continue serving the Convention for a further, and definitely last, period of three years. However, I will understand perfectly if the Standing Committee comes to the conclusion that it is time “to bring in new blood”. In this case, the process to recruit my successor should be initiated immediately after the Standing Committee meeting in November/December.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Delmar Blasco
Secretary General

Copies: Voting Members of the Standing Committee:

- Argentina (Att. Mr. Oscar Padín, Secretaría de Recursos Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable)
- Algeria (Att. Mr. Abdallah Ghebalou, Direction général des forêts, Ministère de l'Agriculture)
- Armenia (Att. Dr. Karen Jenderedjian, Division of Water Resources and Hydroecosystems, Ministry of Nature Protection)
- Costa Rica (Att. Dr. Orlando Morales, Comissionado Nacional de Humedales, Ministerio del Ambiente y Energía)
- France (Att. Mme. Marie Odile Guth, Direction de la Nature et des Paysages, Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement)
- India (Att. Mmt. Malti Sinha, Additional Secretary from Ministry of Environment and Forests)
- Japan (Att. Toshio Torii, Wildlife Protection Division, Environment Agency)
- Mexico (Att. M.Z.V. Felipe Ramírez Ruíz de Velasco, Director General de Vida Silvestre, Instituto Nacional de Ecología)
- Norway (Dr. Peter Johan Schei, International Negotiations Director, Directorate for Nature Management)
- Slovak Republic (Att. Mr. Peter Straka, Director General of the Section for Nature and Landscape Protection, Ministry of the Environment)
- Spain (Att. Sr. D. Jesús Serrada Hierro, Subdirector General de Conservación de la Biodiversidad, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente)
- Togo (Att. M. Moumouni Abdou-Kerim, Directeur des Parcs Nationaux et des Réserves de Faunes et de Chasses, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Protection Forestière)
- Trinidad and Tobago (Att. Mr. Sheriff Faizool, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources)
- Uganda (Att. Mr. Paul Mafabi, Programme Manager, National Wetlands Programme)

- Director General of IUCN, Dr. Maritta R. von Biberstein Koch-Weser