

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC24-8

Agenda item 9.2.i

## Issues arising from COP7 requiring action by the Standing Committee – Tasks of the Standing Committee members

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is requested to review its designated responsibilities and tasks, as set out in Resolution VII.1, and agree on the appropriate ways to discharge these obligations.

In particular, the Standing Committee is requested to review the efforts being taken by the Bureau to recruit new member states of the Convention, and to agree on actions that the Standing Committee and its members could take to assist in this area.

### Background

1. Paragraphs 20 and 21 and Annex II of Resolution VII.1 (attached) lists the responsibilities and tasks of Contracting Parties elected as regional representatives in the Standing Committee. This first meeting of the new Standing Committee provides an opportunity for members to discuss and agree upon how they plan to discharge their responsibilities, especially in terms of communication among regional representatives and consultations with Contracting Parties from their regions.
2. A very practical aspect that should be resolved at the time of this Standing Committee meeting is the request contained in paragraph 3 of the list of Tasks assigned to Regional Representatives:  
  
“To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. **To this effect, when there is more than one regional representative, they shall agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each regional representative.**” (Emphasis added)
3. In addition, paragraph 20 of Resolution VII.27 reads: The COP “FURTHER URGES all Contracting Parties, and especially the member countries of the Standing Committee in each region, those with neighboring countries that are not yet Parties to the Ramsar Convention, and those that share the range area of wetland-dependent migratory species with non-Contracting Parties, to increase their efforts for achieving the goal of universal membership contained in General Objective 1 of the Strategic Plan by encouraging those countries to accede to the Convention, so that the target of 150 member States can be

reached before Ramsar COP8 and the Convention can pursue its global mission more effectively.”

4. In considering the matter of efforts to recruit new member states, the Standing Committee should be aware of the more recent efforts made by the Bureau in this regard. The Convention Work Plan 2000-2002 identifies Africa, central Asia, the Middle East, and Small Island Developing States as priorities for recruitment action. Note that at the time of preparing this agenda paper, the following were **NOT** Contracting Parties of the Convention: Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Holy See, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Federated States of Micronesia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nauru, Nigeria, Niue, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

a) **Small Island Developing States (SIDS):**

- The Bureau produced the specific leaflet (attached) in 1998, which was widely distributed throughout these countries;
- At COP7 Recommendation 7.2 was adopted relating to SIDS, which urges that further efforts be taken to recruit these countries to the Convention. One key action, which the Standing Committee should also address at this meeting (Agenda Item 9.2.viii), is to review the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and establish those priority actions which the Ramsar Convention will promote pursuant to this significant policy paper. A strong response to the Barbados Programme of Action will help to convince many of the SIDS to join the Convention. **The Standing Committee may wish to consider a formal invitation to the SIDS to have input to this process, whether they are Contracting Parties or not** (refer to Agenda Paper for Item 9.2.viii);
- Recommendation 7.2 on SIDS also includes paragraph 21 as follows: “INVITES other Contracting Parties and donor organizations... to develop mechanisms for providing direct technical and training support for the Small Island Developing States, including support for a small island state internship programme and a specialist position on small island issues within the Ramsar Bureau, as a permanent post.” In response to this the Bureau has sought support through the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to support an intern position for a Pacific Islander, and a response to this request is still awaited. **The Standing Committee may wish to consider ways in which it could indicate further support for such a position being sponsored within the Bureau.**

b) **Central Asia and the Middle East:**

- The Bureau has recently published a special leaflet and technical paper on the Ramsar Convention and the wetlands of the western Asia eco-region which are designed to encourage membership among these countries. These are to be distributed widely to raise awareness about the Convention and its relevance to the countries of this arid and semi-arid region.

c) **Africa:**

- The Bureau plans also to produce a special 'recruitment' leaflet for the countries of Africa, similar in design concept to those printed for SIDS and the western Asia eco-region.

d) **Of a more general nature:**

- The Bureau proposes to send its briefing kit for Ministers and high-level decision-makers to all non-Contracting Parties (see Agenda Item 7.2 – World Wetlands Day). This includes a leaflet summarizing the key aspects of the Convention's work and the decisions of COP7, plus the new Ramsar Convention video.
- The Bureau also continues to work with many countries that are preparing to join the Convention and, as resources allow, is being proactive in encouraging other countries that have significant wetland areas to consider accession.

5. One option which Standing Committee may wish to consider is for members to support the efforts to recruit new members by making direct approaches to appropriate neighbouring or nearby countries which are not Contracting Parties, at the diplomatic and officer level, urging them to join the Convention. These efforts could be supported by the various resource materials produced by the Bureau.
6. In addition, Contracting Parties may consider the possibility of hosting subregional meetings inviting the neighbouring countries which are not yet CPs to Ramsar, in order to brief them on the Convention and its benefits. This was done by South Africa in February 1998 with financial support from the USA, in an effort that was very much appreciated; in the case of this meeting, while the South African Ministry of Environment and Tourism acted as host and took care of all aspects of the meeting preparations, the Ramsar Bureau provided advice and assistance, mainly through the provision of documentation. The Secretary General and the Regional Coordinator attended the meeting in order to provide detailed briefings on different aspects of the Convention's work.

## Resolution VII.1

*“People and Wetlands: The Vital Link”*  
7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),  
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999

### **Regional Categorization of countries under the Convention, and composition, roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee, including tasks of Standing Committee members**

#### **EXTRACT**

20. DETERMINES that within the policy agreed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee shall be to:
- a) carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval;
  - b) make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
  - c) supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the implementation of policy by the Ramsar Bureau, the execution of the Bureau's budget, and conduct of the Bureau's programmes;
  - d) provide guidance and advice to the Ramsar Bureau on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Bureau;
  - e) act as Conference Committee at meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
  - f) establish subgroups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
  - g) promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
  - h) submit proposals to the COP for the election of members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP);

- i) approve the work plan of the STRP on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
  - j) adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;
  - k) review each triennium the criteria for and select the laureates of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18;
  - l) report to the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.
21. DETERMINES that the tasks of the regional representatives elected to serve in the Standing Committee shall be those contained in Annex II of this resolution;

## **Annex II**

### **Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee**

The Contracting Parties that have accepted to be elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee shall have the following tasks:

1. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives, according to paragraph 10 of this resolution, and to make every effort that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
2. When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other regional representative(s).
3. To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one regional representative, they shall agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each regional representative.
4. To canvass the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
5. To advise the Bureau in setting the agenda of regional meetings.
6. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.

7. To provide advice as requested by the Chairperson and/or the chairs of subgroups and/or the Bureau of the Convention.
8. In the regions concerned, to make deliberate efforts to encourage other countries to join the Convention.