

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

25th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland: 23- 27 October 2000

DOC. SC25-14

Agenda item 18.1

8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8):

Report from the host country on dates and venue and other organizational issues, including general theme and slogan

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to receive the advice of the Subgroup on COP8 on this matter and the required decisions in relation to venue, date and other practical aspects of the organization of COP8.

1. While Spain, as the host country for COP8, will present an oral report to the Subgroup on COP8 and to the Standing Committee on issues that are the responsibility of the host country, the Bureau is in a position to anticipate the following information and proposals for consideration by the Subgroup on COP8 and decision by the Standing Committee.
2. The Minister of Environment of Spain, Mr Jaume Matas, and the Secretary General of the Convention signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 26 September 2000 concerning the responsibilities of the host country and the Ramsar Bureau in relation to the preparations for and holding of Ramsar COP8. According to the MOU Spain will make a generous contribution of SFR 821,000 towards the Bureau costs related to COP8, including a contribution to the sponsored delegates fund, as follows:

1.	Translation of documents (before and during the COP)	200,000
2.	Reproduction and distribution of documents before COP and freight of materials to the COP8 venue	60,000
3.	Consultants and experts	65,000
4.	Temporary support staff	25,000
5.	Interpreters	65,000
6.	40 return air tickets to the COP8 venue (Bureau staff, interpreters and translators)	30,000
7.	Per diems (40 x 12 x 200)	96,000
8.	COP proceedings in the three official languages	150,000
9.	Sponsored delegates fund	100,000
10.	Miscellaneous	30,000

TOTAL

SFR 821,000

3. At the press conference that followed the signing of the MOU, the Minister of Environment announced that the central government has accepted the offer of the Government of the Generalitat de Valencia (autonomous government of the Valencia region) to host Ramsar COP8 in its capital city. The offer of the Valencia Government is to hold the conference in the buildings of the brand new Science Museum “Príncipe Felipe”, one of the buildings of the complex “The City of Arts and Sciences”.
4. Concerning dates, the host government, in consultation with the Bureau, is proposing 11 to 19 November 2002 (subject to a final decision on the duration of the conference) as the dates for COP8. Holding the COP in the second half of the year would constitute a departure from the previous practice of having the Ramsar COP in the first half of the year. This proposal is based in the following considerations:
 - a) while this may have not been made explicit to Ramsar COP7 when Spain extended the invitation to host COP8, the Council of Ministers decision on 9 May 1999 to invite COP8 explicitly says “in the second half of 2002”. The main reason for this is that Spain will have the rotating Presidency of the European Union in the first semester of 2002 and wants to avoid additional international commitments in that period of time;
 - b) while initially the Bureau tried to persuade Spain to agree to dates in the first half of the year, subsequently the Bureau has come to the conclusion that holding COP8 late in the triennium will be beneficial, in the sense that it would allow more time for the Bureau, the STRP and the Contracting Parties in general to implement the decisions of COP7, and in particular the Convention’s Work Plan 2000-2002. Having COP8 at the beginning of 2002 could imply arriving at the meeting with a poor record of implementation, which could reflect negatively upon the Convention;
 - c) the first half of 2002 appears already extraordinarily crowded with previously scheduled major meetings of the biodiversity-related conventions and organizations.
5. Thus, the Bureau recommends that the Standing Committee agree to this date for holding COP8, with the following calendar for Standing Committee meetings:
 - a) the 26th Meeting of the Standing Committee is held on 3-7 December 2001. SC26 reviews the draft documents for COP8 and approves those that are ready. It entrusts the Subgroup on COP8 to approve the documents that are not yet completely finalized;
 - b) the Subgroup on COP8 meets on 6-8 May 2002 to review and approve pending documentation and to select the recipients of the Ramsar Award. The Standing Committee is consulted by mail if there are issues about which the Subgroup feels unable to take a final decision;
 - c) the 27th Meeting of the Standing Committee is convened on 10 November 2002, at the COP8 venue, to consider items in the COP Rule of Procedures that require a recommendation and/or decision of the Standing Committee, and other pending issues;

- d) the 28th Meeting of the Standing Committee is held immediately after the closure of COP8, in order to elect the Chair and other officers for the next triennium;
 - e) the 29th Meeting of the Standing Committee, 16-18 December 2002, to approve the Bureau budget and work plan for 2003 and to deal with any other immediate follow-up to COP8. This meeting could also be the occasion to appoint the new Secretary General of the Convention, who should take up the post on 1 August 2003 (see DOC. SC-25-31 on this issue).
6. It is understood that the Spain will bring suggestions to the Subgroup on COP8's discussion of a general theme and slogan at its meeting immediately prior to the Standing Committee meeting.