

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

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

DOC. SC25-26

Agenda item 22.5

Recommendations on unpaid Contracting Parties' contributions (Decision SC24-27)

Action requested: The Standing Committee is requested to discuss this matter and take a decision on a recommendation to be put forward to COP8.

1. Decision SC24-27 reads as follows: "The Standing Committee requested its Subgroup on Finance to prepare a recommendation on the issue of unpaid contributions for consideration at the 25th meeting of the Committee."
2. In addition, Resolution VII.28 "16. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to prepare a proposal for Ramsar COP8 on measures that could be taken in the case of Contracting Parties that are in arrears of two or more years at the time of the ordinary meeting of the COP, taking into account the practice in the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies, including other conventions."
3. This issue was on the agenda of the Standing Committee at its meeting in 1998 and the Bureau prepared an analysis and recommendation that to date remains the same. On that occasion one voting member of the Standing Committee opposed the action recommended by the Bureau, and consequently, due to lack of full consensus, the Standing Committee did not pass a recommendation on this matter at COP7 in 1999.
4. Out of a total of 122 Contracting Parties, 12 Parties have never paid their contributions since joining the Convention. Some of these joined only two years ago, but others have been Parties for 10 years or more. In addition, 14 other countries either owe contributions for more than two years or have only paid sporadically once or twice over a period of ten years. Attached is a chart showing the arrears of all countries, which presents total dues unpaid since 1994, when the Convention decided to use the accruals systems for dues accounting.
5. The total owed in dues for the period 1988-2000 amounts to SFR 662,267. The total still owed for the year 2000 amounts to SFR 296,214, despite the fact that according to the decisions of the COP dues are payable on the first of January of each year.
6. The Bureau's study of unpaid dues is not solely concerned with the fact that some Parties pay their contributions late, but with how the unpaid dues impact our projected

budget figures. The Bureau is forced to calculate how much in dues will not be paid each year, or will be paid late.

7. Article 6.6 of the Convention establishes that “Each Contracting Party shall contribute to the budget according to the scale of contributions adopted by unanimity of the Contracting Parties present and voting at a meeting of the ordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties.”
8. The Bureau believes that the Contracting Parties should enforce this obligation. According to the UN Charter, state members whose arrears equal the amount of their assessed contribution for the preceding two years have their voting privileges at the General Assembly suspended. The Convention on Migratory Species has included the following rule in the Rules of Procedure for the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (1997): “Rule 14 (2). Representatives of Parties which are three or more years behind in paying their subscriptions on the date of the opening session of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties shall not be eligible to vote. However, the Conference of the Parties may allow such Parties to continue to exercise their right to vote if it is satisfied that the delay in payment arises from exceptional and unavoidable circumstances, and shall receive advice in this regard from the Standing Committee.”
9. In order to encourage timely and regular payment of annual contributions, the Standing Committee may wish to submit a draft decision to the COP8 establishing that from 1 January 2003:
 - a) Contracting Parties whose arrears equal the amount of their assessed contribution for the preceding two years on the date of the opening of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties shall not be eligible to be elected as Regional Representative or Alternate in the Standing Committee of the Convention;
 - b) Contracting Parties whose arrears equal the amount of their assessed contribution for the preceding three years on the date of the opening of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties shall have their right to vote suspended at that meeting;
 - c) Contracting Parties whose arrears equal the amount of their assessed contribution for the preceding two years at the time of considering any request for funding under the Ramsar Small Grants Funds or other funding mechanism under the Convention shall not be eligible for such funding.
 - d) Since these sanctions would commence only at COP9 in 2005, COP8 should authorize the Standing Committee to negotiate a fair arrangement, on a case by case basis, with those Parties that have accumulated considerable arrears, in order to allow them to attend COP9 with a clean slate.