



**Regional consultation in Asia in preparation for the Third Extraordinary Meeting
of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands
Online, 27 September from 09:00 to 11:00 CEST**

Participating Parties (22): Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen.

Summary report

Agenda item 1. Election of the Chair of the meeting

- 1.1 Japan opened the preparatory meeting and welcomed Asian Parties to the Convention.
- 1.2 At the nomination by the Republic of Korea, the Parties elected Japan to chair this Asian regional consultation meeting.

Agenda item 2. Approval of the agenda

- 2.1 The present Parties approved of the provisional agenda of the meeting.

Agenda item 3. Welcome and Introduction

- 3.1 Japan provided introductory remarks and highlighted that the purpose of this preparatory meeting was to discuss the upcoming 3rd Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and ensure Parties understand how the extraordinary COP will be organized and run, what business will be conducted and to provide an opportunity to discuss the two Draft Resolutions to be considered.
- 3.2 The Secretary General welcomed the Parties and provided an overview of the ongoing work by Standing Committee, its working groups, STRP and the Secretariat support to these activities and the Parties. She noted with satisfaction that the United Nations General Assembly, in its session of 30 August 2021, proclaimed 2 February as World Wetlands Day.

Agenda item 4. Procedural matters for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP

- 4.1 The Secretariat briefly introduced the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP that will meet in **two online sessions on Monday 25 October 2021 and Thursday 28 October**. Should all business not be conducted on the Thursday, Parties will meet again on Friday 29 October. The online sessions are strictly **limited to three hours**: 13:00–16:00 CEST Geneva time (UTC+2) with interpretation in English, French and Spanish (see the working programme **ExCOP3 Doc.3.2**).

- 4.2 The reason for the two-day break is to allow for compliance with Rule 18 (Rules of Procedure *ExCOP3 Doc.4.1*), which allows Parties to submit their credentials up to 48 hours after the opening of the Meeting.
- 4.3 **All Documents** for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP can be downloaded from the event page of the Convention website: <https://www.ramsar.org/event/extraordinary-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-contracting-parties-2021>.
- 4.4 The Bureau of the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP will be composed of the officers elected at COP13 to serve until COP14: President United Arab Emirates (Mohamed Al Afkham), Vice-Presidents Finland (Kristiina Niikkonen) and Uganda (Lucy Iyango), in accordance with Rule 21.
- 4.5 It is crucial **that all Parties register and submit credentials** for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP. The COP requires a quorum of two thirds of all Parties (114 Parties) to take decisions, according to Rules 29 and 39.
- 4.6 As indicated in Diplomatic Notes 2021/6 and 2021/7, representatives shall submit credentials in accordance with Rule 18. **Obtaining credentials may take substantial time**, as they must be signed either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or his/her equivalent, and be submitted in one of the Convention languages. They must bear the name and position of the person who signs the credentials as well as the signature and full address of the appropriate authority.
- 4.7 Credentials should be scanned and **submitted by email** to: excop@ramsar.org as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours after the opening of the Meeting on 25 October, as they need to be reviewed by the Credentials Committee prior to the opening of second session of the Extraordinary COP on Thursday 28 October.
- 4.8 Further information on the requirements and a sample template is available in the previously mentioned Diplomatic Note 2021/6 dated 9 July.
- 4.9 Parties selected China as the regional representative to the Credentials Committee for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP.
- 4.10 Only Parties that have submitted **credentials** for their participating delegates count for reaching the necessary quorum of the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP.
- 4.11 Japan expressed appreciation that, contrary to many Conventions, the Convention on Wetlands has been exemplary by engaging in productive discussions and making decisions despite the global pandemic situation.
- 4.12 Given the virtual nature of the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP, Japan asked whether there are prior written procedures in addition to the Rules of Procedure adopted in COP13 regarding online meetings. The Secretariat highlighted that Rules of Procedure approved at COP13 have been applied for virtual decision making and that the Legal Advisor has been consulted in regards to how they are applied to virtual settings.
- 4.13 Several Parties highlighted the internal challenges of obtaining credentials from the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or his/her equivalent, particularly under the current situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Agenda item 5. Discussion of the Draft Resolutions
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- 5.1 **New dates for COP14:** The Secretariat introduced document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.1*, i.e. the Draft Resolution to approve the new dates for COP14 of 21-29 November 2022 in Wuhan, China. The

new dates were proposed by the host country, and subsequently these dates were approved by Standing Committee (Decision SC59-10) to be submitted to the COP for approval. The Secretariat continues to monitor the Covid-19 situation and possible travel restrictions in place, as well as how other global conventions react to such challenges (notably UN CBD COP15 in Kunming, China, in April 2022).

- 5.2 **Convention budget for 2022:** The Secretariat introduced document *ExCOP3 Doc.8.2*, i.e. the Draft Resolution on financial and budgetary matters for approval of a one-year, 2022 core budget for the Convention. The proposed budget has been critically reviewed and improved by the Subgroup on Finance and subsequently approved by Standing Committee in June 2021 (Decision SC59-31) to be submitted to the COP for approval. This budget is based on a 0% increase as compared to the 2019-2021 triennium.
- 5.3 The annual dues for 2022 will be assessed in accordance with the most recent scale of assessments for the contributions to the UN budget, as per Resolution XIII.2, paragraph 29. It is expected that the new scale of assessment for the years 2022-2024 will be released towards the end of 2021.
- 5.3 Yemen sought information on the previous budget expenditure of the Convention. The Secretariat highlighted the fact that annual financial statements are submitted to the Standing Committee, which can be accessed via the following link:
<https://www.ramsar.org/about/transparency>.

Agenda item 6. Logistical matters for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP

- 6.1 KUDO will be the online platform used for the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the COP. Most Parties are familiar with the platform from the online Standing Committee meetings 58 and 59.
- 6.2 Only **registered participants** will receive a **link** ahead of the Meeting to be used to connect at the beginning of each COP session.
- 6.3 Registered participants are encouraged to test their equipment in advance during a test session (dates will be announced). Before and during the Meeting, dedicated operators from KUDO will be available to help with any technical issue. A specific chat window will allow registered participants to communicate directly with them and solve any problem. Registered participants are strongly encouraged to use a headset as this greatly increases the quality of the audio should they take the floor.
- 6.4 If connection is not possible, participants can write to kudo@ramsar.org to reach the Secretariat for assistance. KUDO works on computers, notebooks and mobile phones, and simultaneous interpretation between English, French and Spanish will be provided.
- 6.5 Participants need to **register** not later than *13 October 2021*:
<https://contacts.ramsar.org/register-excop>.
- 6.6 For registration, an official **nomination letter** signed by the Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be uploaded indicating the names of the representatives and the head of the delegation of the Party.

Agenda item 7. Outstanding contributions and the requirement for provisions

- 7.1 The Secretariat reported on the importance of regular payment of annual contributions. In addition to creating a gap in the regular budget when contributions are not made, there is a need to put aside funds to manage risks of non-payment, as required by the auditors. Given recent changes in the methodology for the calculation of these funds, also known as provisions,

when contributions are not paid for more than 4 years the provisions increase substantially. This means that more money needs to be taken out from the regular budget of the Convention to cover the provisions. Thus, without the regular payment of all annual contributions, the budget of the Convention could be in shortfall and affect the support provided to the Parties, as well as operations of the Convention

- 7.2 The Secretariat explained that in accordance with Decision SC57-39 taken by the Standing Committee, the provision for non-collection of outstanding annual dues has been calculated since 2019 in accordance with the method proposed by the external auditor. As for prior years, a provision of 20% is applied on dues not received within two years, 60% on dues not received within three years, and 80% on dues not received within four years. In order to fully comply with Swiss law, with the objective of incorporating the economic risk resulting from delayed payment by some Parties over many years, a provision of 100% is applied on all outstanding balances of Parties which had not made contribution payment to cover for outstanding dues for more than four years at the time when the provision is calculated.
- 7.3 The Secretariat drew attention to Decision SC58-15, in which the Standing Committee at its online sessions of 23 and 25 June 2020, “instructed the Secretariat to continue to publish the status of each Party’s contribution on the Convention’s website and invited the Parties with outstanding contributions to agree on a payment plan in discussion with the Secretariat; and instructed the Secretariat to work with Parties which have been able to pay outstanding contributions, particularly long-standing ones, to identify good practices and efforts that could be shared.”
- 7.4 Japan enquired regarding the payment inflows of the year 2021 compared to the previous year. The Secretariat informed participants that there has not been a significant decrease in receipt of 2021 assessed contributions from the Parties that have been regularly paying their contributions. However, the issue still remains with the Parties with who the balance of outstanding contributions continues to increase.
- 7.5 Indonesia highlighted the global economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it may have affected the Contracting Parties capacity to pay the annual contributions. The Secretariat encouraged the Parties which have suffered from the Covid-19 pandemic to contact the Secretariat to discuss the payment plans, as recommended by the Standing Committee. Furthermore, the status of each Party’s contribution is updated monthly and published here: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/status_contributions.pdf

Agenda item 8. Any other business

- 8.1 Japan provided a question regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the resumed 59th meeting of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat noted that the current hope is that the next meeting of the Standing Committee will be held in person. The Secretariat will continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation and possible travel restrictions and if the Standing Committee concludes that it is not possible to meet in person, the Secretariat will follow the Standing Committee guidance to move the meeting to a virtual platform.
- 8.2 Before closing the meeting, the Secretariat thanked the Chair and the Contracting Parties for their engagement and flexibility. The Secretariat will monitor registrations for the Extraordinary Meeting of the COP and support all Parties, notably those who missed this meeting, to register in time and to produce their Credentials.
- 8.3 The Chair closed the meeting at 10:30 CEST.