

**Report of the Management Working Group:
Report on the activities of the Management Working Group**

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. note the present report of the Management Working Group; and
- ii. consider the recommendation of the Management Working Group as described in paragraphs six through eight to authorize the Secretary General to enter into new cooperation agreements following the guidance in SC54 Doc.16.Rev.1.

Background

1. This report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Management Working Group for the period following the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC62) which was held from 4-8 September 2023 through 4 March 2024, the date of publication for SC63 documents.
2. The role and composition of the Management Working Group is set out in Resolutions IX.24 and X.4. Membership of the Management Working Group is comprised of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee of the previous triennium, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee established for the forthcoming triennium, the Chairs of the Subgroup on Finance of the previous and forthcoming Standing Committees, the Chairs of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel in the previous and forthcoming triennia, any other interested Contracting Parties, keeping in mind the desirability of equitable regional participation, a representative of the International Organization Partners (IOPs), and the Secretary General *ex officio*.
3. The current membership of the Management Working Group is as follows: China, Gabon, Mexico, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, current and past Chairs of the STRP, WWF representing the IOPs, and Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Samoa and Switzerland as interested Parties. China as the Chair of the Standing Committee serves as the Chair of the Management Working Group.

Work undertaken by the Management Working Group

4. Standing Committee in Decision SC62-49 "*requested the Management Working Group to prepare a document that identifies the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting, noting that this Decision supersedes Decision SC59-40*". A drafting group comprised of China, Gabon, Sweden, and led by

Switzerland was formed to draft the requested document. This draft document is presented as SC63 Doc.7.2 for consideration by the Standing Committee.

5. The Management Working Group met virtually on 18 January 2024 to finalize preparation of SC63 Doc.7.2 *Report on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General*, review progress in the implementation of the CEPA and STRP work plans, review preparations for COP15 and consider a proposal to recommend that the Standing Committee repeal Decision 52-11
6. At this meeting the Secretariat presented a proposal to repeal Decision SC52-11 in which *“The Standing Committee decided that the Management Working Group be asked to review all new MOUs and other such agreements between the Ramsar Secretariat and other bodies, at its meeting immediately before the Standing Committee meeting at which the agreements were to be submitted for approval.”* The Secretariat informed the Management Working Group that it had been following the guidance for renewals of MOUs provided in document SC54 Doc.16 Rev.1 which provides a decision tree and guidance approved by the Standing Committee for when cooperation agreements should be used, noting that donor agreements fall outside of this process.
7. The Secretariat invited the Management Working Group to consider giving the Secretary General the authority to determine when an MOU with a new body is appropriate, following the guidance found in document SC54 Doc.16.Rev.1 and IUCN’s legal template for cooperative agreements. The Secretariat shared that this is in line with the approach of other MEAs, is in line with the duties and responsibilities within the TORs of the Secretary General, and enables a “light and agile” approach to establishing cooperative agreements as expressed by the Management Working Group in the deliberations to inform SC54 Doc.16 Rev.1. The Secretariat also noted that Standing Committee decisions in general should be for actions falling within a triennium and not provide long-term instruction and guidance, and that instruction on the authority to enter into new cooperation agreements should be included in the draft resolution on synergies for consideration by COP15.
8. The Management Working Group was supportive of this proposal and recommends that the Standing Committee take the following decision: *“The Standing Committee authorizes the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands to enter into new cooperation agreements with organizations that meet the criteria found in SC54 Doc.16.Rev.1. Further, the Standing Committee instructs the Secretariat to include this instruction in the draft resolution on synergies for consideration by COP15. This decision repeals Decision SC52-11.”*