

**Communication, capacity building, education, participation  
and awareness (CEPA):  
Report of the Secretariat on the proposed future operations of the CEPA  
Oversight Panel, in accordance with Resolution XIV.8**

**Action requested:**

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. approve the proposal of the Secretariat on the future operations of the CEPA Oversight Panel, and instruct the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution for SC64 to enable its formalization by the Conference of the Contracting Parties at COP15; and
- ii. advise the Secretariat on the process and timeline to be followed for nominating the Panel for the 2025-2028 triennium.

**Background and introduction**

1. Resolution IX.18 of 2005 on *Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention* provided initial guidance on the functions, composition and modus operandi of the CEPA Oversight Panel.
2. The CEPA Oversight Panel for 2016-2018 made recommendations on the development of a new approach for CEPA (communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness), which were included in document COP13 Doc.10, *Report on implementation of the CEPA Programme 2016-2018 and recommendations on future directions*.<sup>1</sup>
3. These recommendations informed Resolution XIII.5 of 2018 on *Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention* which instructed the CEPA Oversight Panel, at the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59), “to present its proposed new approach and a draft resolution on this subject to be submitted to COP14; and further instructs the Standing Committee to take this matter further, for decision at COP14.” This new approach was to take into account the work already carried out by the Panel and the Working Group on CEPA Implementation, incorporate the advice of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and complement the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/cop13-doc10-report-implementation-cepa-programme-2016-2018-and-recommendations-future>.

4. Resolution XIV.8 on *The new CEPA approach*<sup>2</sup> of 2022 defines the characteristics of the new CEPA approach in Annex 1 and encourages its implementation by Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners and other partners, noting that it is designed to recognize and be complementary to existing CEPA activities. Annex 3 of the same Resolution defines the terms of reference of the CEPA Oversight Panel as part of the new CEPA approach.
5. Paragraph 12 of Resolution XIV.8 “instructs the Secretariat, in collaboration with the CEPA Oversight Panel, and in consultation with Parties, to prepare for SC63 a proposal on the future operations of the Oversight Panel to support the new approach, including the nomination procedure, using the terms of reference contained in Annex 3 as general guidance”.

### **Elements of the proposal on future operations of the Oversight Panel**

6. The proposed plan on the future operations of the Oversight Panel is presented as Annex 1. The following elements have been included in the plan.

#### *Composition of the Panel*

7. Resolution IX.18 defined the composition of the Panel to include the Chair of the Standing Committee, or at his or her request the Vice-Chair, and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance. Given the diversity of the expertise sought, the Resolution noted that the Panel’s membership could also include:
  - i. Two national CEPA Focal Points;
  - ii. Chair of the STRP/Wetlands International CEPA Specialist Group;
  - iii. Relevant experts in different aspects of CEPA not covered in the above, taking into consideration appropriate and balanced geographical representation;
  - iv. Ramsar Secretariat (*ex officio*).
8. Annex 3 of Resolution XIV.8 provides further guidance on the composition of the Panel as follows:
  - i. CEPA activities are diverse and thus require a range of expertise. This diversity of expertise should be reflected in the composition of the Panel.
  - ii. The Panel should have balanced representation from all regions of the Convention.
  - iii. The Panel should ideally be comprised of at least one CEPA NGO Focal Point and one CEPA Government Focal Point.
  - iv. International Organization Partners should select one representative that will act as the liaison between the Panel and the six IOPs.
  - v. The Panel should include a youth representative.
  - vi. The Panel should include an Indigenous member as feasible.
  - vii. To ensure institutional memory, it is recommended that at least one of the Panel’s members has served as Panel member during the previous triennium.
  - viii. In order to ensure collaboration and information exchange between the CEPA Oversight Panel and other Convention bodies, specifically the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, a representative from each body should be nominated to serve on the CEPA Oversight Panel.
9. The membership of the CEPA Oversight Panel for the current triennium (2023-2025) is published on the Convention website at <https://www.ramsar.org/current-standing-committee-2023-2025-members>. This membership meets the criteria provided in Resolutions IX.18 and

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/resolution-xiv8-new-cepa-approach>.

XIV.8. The proposal for the Panel's future membership is based on the guidance provided by both Resolutions.

#### *Nomination procedure*

10. Contracting Parties have expressed the importance of establishing membership of subsidiary bodies of the Convention as early in each triennium as possible. Resolution XIV.8 calls for a nomination process for the Oversight Panel to take place in advance of each COP, and the proposal includes a timeline for the nomination process, noting that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance are not selected until the first meeting of the Standing Committee following the COP. Further, the proposed composition of the Oversight Panel resulting from the nomination process will need to be approved by the Standing Committee.

#### *Modus operandi*

11. The modus operandi of the Panel was defined in Resolutions IX.18 and Resolution XIV.8. The modus operandi in the Secretariat's proposed plan applies operational experience and lessons from past triennia to build on the guidance from these two Resolutions.

#### *Towards a more strategic, integrated and effective CEPA programme*

12. The Oversight Panel for the 2018-2022 triennium provided recommendations to the Standing Committee to make CEPA more strategic, integrated and effective, in document SC58 Doc.15.1. These recommendations, drawn from a survey of National Focal Points, CEPA Government Focal Points, and CEPA NGO Focal Points on the new approach to CEPA, have been incorporated into the present proposal along with guidance from Resolution XIV.8.
13. The proposal on the future operations of the Oversight Panel found in Annex 1 has been reviewed by the current CEPA Oversight Panel including the STRP representative on the Oversight Panel, and their comments and recommendations have been reflected in it.
14. The Standing Committee is invited to approve the proposal, and instruct the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution for SC64 to enable its formalization by the Conference of the Contracting Parties at COP15.

## **Annex 1**

### **Proposal on future operations of the CEPA Oversight Panel**

The Convention on Wetland's Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) is an instrument to provide guidance to Contracting Parties, the Convention Secretariat, Convention International Organization Partners (IOPs), NGOs, community-based organizations and other stakeholders in the appropriate actions to engage, enlist and enable people to act for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

The main role of the CEPA Oversight Panel is to oversee preparation and implementation of CEPA within the Convention and in particular to advise the Standing Committee and the Secretariat on national and international CEPA activities, including the CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). Specific functions include:

- i. delivering results originating from specific communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) requests included in Resolutions of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) and the Strategic Plan;
- ii. examining CEPA needs and gaps in implementation in order to identify CEPA activities to be integrated in the Strategic Plan;
- iii. monitoring and reporting on current CEPA issues within the Convention and the progress of implementation of current CEPA priorities, especially with reference to the CEPA activities included in the Strategic Plan as well as COP Resolutions; and
- iv. liaising with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to improve CEPA synergies among Conventions.

This proposal on the future operations of the Panel aims to provide guidance on its operations that will provide all stakeholders with greater clarity and enable the Panel to operate more effectively and efficiently. This proposal reflects instructions and guidance provided by relevant Resolutions, Decisions of the Standing Committee and recommendations of the current and past Panels.

#### Membership of the Panel

As CEPA activities are diverse and require a range of expertise, diversity of expertise should be reflected in the composition of the Panel. The Panel should have balanced representation from all regions of the Convention. To ensure institutional memory, it is recommended that at least one of the Panel's members has served as a Panel member during the previous triennium. The Panel may invite additional CEPA experts as required.

The membership of the Panel should include:

- i. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee
- ii. Two national CEPA Government Focal Points
- iii. Two CEPA NGO Focal Points
- iv. STRP Vice-Chair (or STRP representative)
- v. International Organization Partners to select one representative that will act as the liaison between the Panel and the six IOPs.
- vi. A youth representative.

- vii. An Indigenous Peoples representative
- viii. Contracting Parties (one per region separate from any regional representation from the members listed above)
- ix. A representative of the Secretariat of the Convention (*ex officio*)

#### Nomination procedure

It is proposed that a COP15 Resolution provide further instruction on the nomination process following the guidance in Resolution XIV.8 Annex 3 as outlined below.

- During pre-COP regional meetings Contracting Parties are informed of the membership of the CEPA Oversight Panel and encouraged to identify potential interested and qualified members.
- Four months in advance of the COP, the Secretariat issues a call for nominations to all Contracting Parties for the following categories:
  - CEPA Government Focal Point;
  - CEPA NGO Focal Point;
  - Indigenous Peoples representative; and
  - Youth representative.
- Four months in advance of the COP the Secretariat invites IOPs to select a representative to jointly represent IOPs on the Panel.
- During regional meetings at the COP, each region identifies a Contracting Party from the region as a member of the Panel.
- At the first meeting of the Standing Committee immediately after the COP or intersessionally following the COP, the Standing Committee approves the composition of the CEPA Oversight Panel once the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance have been elected. To assist the Standing Committee in determining the composition of the Panel, the Secretariat will present a summary of the nominations received for the CEPA Government Focal Point, CEPA NGO Focal Point, Indigenous Peoples representative and Youth representative categories. If necessary, it is noted that the STRP representative may be identified at a later date.
- Within two months of the end of the COP, the CEPA Oversight Panel holds its first meeting to select its Chair and Vice-Chair and begin the development of its work plan for the triennium in accordance with the instructions received from the COP.
- The proposed new COP15 Resolution would call for the first meeting of a newly composed CEPA Oversight Panel to take place within two months of the closure of the COP, rather than at the COP.

#### Modus operandi

- i. The main working language of the Panel is English. Reports of the CEPA Oversight Panel to the Standing Committee will be translated into the official languages of the Convention.
- ii. The Panel will operate as far as possible through electronic means (email, video meetings, collaborative online tools, etc.). If it is thought necessary, and if funding permits, the Panel may seek to meet face-to-face during the triennium.

- iii. The Panel will report on its activities to each meeting of the Standing Committee.
- iv. The CEPA Government Focal Point representatives and the NGO CEPA Focal Points should, as far as possible and as necessary, consult with and seek input from their counterparts.
- v. Oversight Panel members who represent governments are encouraged to join established Convention working groups to contribute CEPA knowledge and expertise to the work plans of the groups.

#### Towards a more strategic, integrated and effective CEPA programme

The characteristics of the new CEPA approach, defined in Annex 1 of Resolution XIV.8, inform the identification of concrete priority actions for the CEPA Oversight Panel to implement, consistent with the first characteristic of a reduced set of activities clearly linked to the Strategic Plan that will lead to a more strategic, integrated and effective CEPA programme. Proposed actions include:

- i. Strengthening the CEPA Focal Point network – The current CEPA Oversight Panel has within its workplan the action to review how the CEPA Focal Point network is supported, and make recommendations to strengthen the network through improved communication, information sharing and capacity building. These recommendations will be included in the Oversight Panel's report to SC63 and implemented during the current triennium.
- ii. A guide to roles and responsibilities for CEPA Focal Points – The Secretariat in consultation with the Oversight Panel will produce a digital brochure on the roles and responsibilities of CEPA Government and NGO Focal Points.
- iii. Updated CEPA guidance – The Secretariat utilizing CEPA core budget funding to develop guidance for CEPA Focal Points to replace the outdated 2010 Handbook on Wetland CEPA.
- iv. Training and information sharing for Government CEPA Focal Points – The Secretariat in collaboration with the Oversight Panel will prepare a training webinar for Government and NGO Focal Points. The webinar will be delivered in the official languages of the Convention with a recording of the webinar available on the CEPA section of the Convention website.
- v. Integration of CEPA into the Strategic Plan of the Convention – It is recommended that the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Oversight Panel participate as a member of the Strategic Plan Working Group to facilitate integration of CEPA into the new Strategic Plan and its targets and indicators.
- vi. Reporting on select CEPA activities and achievements identified in the National Report form – Inclusion in the new National Report form to be developed following the adoption in the Fifth Strategic Plan of a set of indicators to monitor and evaluate CEPA implementation at the national level.
- vii. List of Convention resources that support CEPA implementation – Compile and publish in the CEPA section of the website a list of links to resources that support implementation of CEPA.