

Report of the Management Working Group: Report on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

The Standing Committee takes note of the views expressed regarding the process for recruiting a new Secretary General and request the SC-64 to continue discussions on this matter, on the basis of the Annex to document 7.2 Rev1.

Introduction

1. In November 2022, the Standing Committee entrusted the Management Working Group to develop a draft resolution to guide the process for recruiting a new Secretary General (Decision SC59-40).
2. The Management Working Group met in September 2023 and discussed the task in view of drafting a resolution for the recruitment of a new Secretary General. One country raised concerns on the format of such a draft resolution. If, in the future, a Recruitment Committee were to have difficulties in following such a resolution, the Parties of the Convention would have to adopt an amended or a new resolution at the next Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. This would result in a considerable delay of the recruitment process.
3. A drafting group for the Secretary General recruitment process (China, Gabon, Sweden and Switzerland) was established and drafted a document on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, for the meeting of the Management Working Group on 18 January 2024.
4. The Management Working Group examined the document of the drafting group for the Secretary General recruitment process and proposes two options:
 - a. a draft resolution for the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2025 on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, as asked for in Decision SC59-40 (Annex 1);

¹ The document has been revised to show in tracked changes the outcomes of the contact group discussion

- b. a draft decision for the 63rd session of the Standing Committee on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, bearing in mind the need for flexibility (Annex 2).
- 5. The two annexes include a link to a compilation of examples of documents used in the 2022 Secretary General recruitment. These documents are intended to provide context to the Contracting Parties in their deliberations on the annex texts. Similar documents prepared for future recruitment processes will adapt to circumstances as they may change and will be guided by the final text of the approved Resolution or the Standing Committee Decision.
- 6. The Management Working Group met on 18 January 2024 and recommended that the option of a Standing Committee decision is favoured.

[Annex 1

Draft resolution on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General²

1. ACKNOWLEDGING that the selection of a new Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands is one of the Standing Committee's responsibilities; [and that the process for the selection of a new Secretary General must be inclusive and transparent]; and
2. RECOGNIZING that the task is to hire the best qualified person for the job, ~~regardless of~~
[2bis. Recognizing the need to promote gender, age, nationality or corresponding Convention regionality; and equitable regional representation at different steps in the selection process;]

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

[Current Secretary Generals' efforts are reviewed through X process at X time during their first term to determine if they are eligible for renewal for the maximum term length as Secretary General.

[If the current SG receives reviews of exemplary performance, they are able to be renewed through the approval of the Standing Committee.

[If not, the following process is considered:]

3.—

DECIDES to start the recruitment process as soon as possible after the Chair of the Standing Committee has communicated that the Secretary General is ending his/her employment;

4. DECIDES that the process will take place virtually and using English as its working language, and should be completed such that a decision regarding the candidate recommended by the Recruitment Committee can be made by the Standing Committee at an ordinary or extraordinary meeting, and that thereafter, the final part of the recruitment (terms of contract, etc.) will proceed;
5. DECIDES that the Recruitment Committee is to be formed by up to two Contracting Parties representing each regional group under the Convention, [preferably members of the Management Working Group, and/or Standing Committee], including the host of the next Conference of the Contracting Parties;
6. DECIDES that the Recruitment Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the Standing Committee, and that the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee will act as vice-chair for the Recruitment Committee;
7. DECIDES that while the Secretariat is not to be involved in the selection process, it will send a diplomatic note announcing the vacancy and provide the necessary administrative support for the proper functioning of the Recruitment Committee;
8. DECIDES that the recruitment process will be supported by an executive search firm, to be proposed by IUCN Human Resources and selected by the Recruitment Committee;

² For examples of documents mentioned in the draft resolution, see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/examples-documents-used-2022-secretary-general-recruitment>.

9. DECIDES to finance the recruitment process including the fees of the executive search firm with adequate funding of the Convention budget, and REQUESTS that the Subgroup on Finance prepare a proposed amendment to the budget and present it to the Standing Committee for its decision;

[9bis. Requests the Recruitment Committee's regional representatives to conduct consultations with entire Regional Groups before the candidate interview process begins in order to solicit input on Contracting Parties' priorities in a new Secretary general.]

[9ter Encourages Regional Groups to submit ideally 1-3 interview questions that will be asked to each candidate during the interview process.]

10. DECIDES that IUCN will be in charge of the recruitment procedure, under the supervision of the Chair of the Standing Committee, [or the Vice-Chair in case of the Chair's absence], while reporting to the Recruitment Committee, with *inter alia* the following tasks:

- a. to propose the schedule for the recruitment process for approval by the Recruitment Committee;
- b. to coordinate the approval by the Recruitment Committee of the terms of reference for the post of the Secretary General and post the vacancy online via the IUCN website recruitment portal;
- c. to prepare the confidentiality agreement in respect of the recruitment of the Secretary General for the Recruitment Committee to sign, enabling its members to take part in the closed meetings and receive confidential information;
- d. to propose the terms of reference for the search firm to the Recruitment Committee, publish a call for proposals from firms, submit three finalists for its selection, and contract the chosen firm; and
- e. to provide information to the Recruitment Committee on each step of the recruitment as a link with the firm, and follow up on the recruitment schedule until the recruitment is finalized;

[f. Ensure that the references of the candidate are vetted by the recruitment firm.]

[11pre. Decides that the Recruitment Committee and IUCN will notify all Contracting Parties of the following steps when they begin and conclude: a) vacancy posting b) close of application submissions and review of applications c) beginning of interview process d) end of interview process e) second round of interviews f) selection forthcoming]

11. DECIDES that the Recruitment Committee will make its recommendation for the new Secretary General [following consultations between the members of the Committee and the respective regional representatives to the Standing Committee and regions, and that such a recommendation is to be presented] at the next ordinary or extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee, ~~for its~~[including providing reasoning behind the Recruitment Committee selection for the Standing Committee's] consideration and decision; and

[11bis. Decides that for the purposes of interpreting paragraph 11 the Standing Committee will consider itself properly consulted if all the following actions have been undertaken:

- (a) the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, presents to the Standing Committee an initial proposal for the terms of reference for the selection of a new Secretary General, containing the criteria to guide the recruitment process;
- (b) The Standing Committee is given adequate time, which should not be less than one month, to consider the proposed terms of reference through regional consultations, and conveys its views to the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee; the views conveyed should be made available to the members of the Standing Committee;
- (c) Should the case arise, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, shall justify the reasons, in writing, for not incorporating any of the suggestions submitted by the Standing Committee into the final version of the terms of reference;
- (d) Following the establishment of a transparent process for recruitment [open to nominations by all Parties, and a selection process resulting in a recommendation to the Standing Committee, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, informs the Standing Committee on a potential nominee, indicating why the candidate is believed to best meet the criteria, including vis-à-vis other shortlisted candidates;
- (e) The Standing Committee is given adequate time, which should not be less than one month, to consider the proposed nomination;
- (f) If there is no consensus in the Standing Committee, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, is to inform the Recruitment Committee that the proposed nomination should not be carried out and that the selection process should continue until the Standing Committee is presented with a proposed nomination that it deems consensual;]
- (g) Considering its formal role in the appointment process, the Standing Committee must receive from the Recruitment Committee, in a timely manner, all information necessary for its consideration. If the Standing Committee seeks additional clarification on any issue, this should be provided by the Chair of the Standing Committee and, where applicable, by IUCN;
- (h) Considering that all members of the Standing Committee are expected to engage with their constituencies throughout the process, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, and, where applicable, IUCN should also transmit to the Standing Committee the relevant information in a format that, while respecting the confidentiality rules that apply to recruitment processes, will allow for its circulation to national focal points for the Convention.]

12. DECIDES that the new Secretary General should commence duty, if at all possible, at such a date so as to provide for a handover period of ten working days.]

[Annex 2

Standing Committee decision on a process for recruiting a new Secretary General³

[Current Secretary Generals' efforts are reviewed through X process at X time during their first term to determine if they are eligible for renewal for the maximum term length as Secretary General.

If the current SG receives reviews of exemplary performance, they are able to be renewed through the approval of the Standing Committee.

If not, the following process is considered:]

The Standing Committee decides that the process for recruiting a new Secretary General will follow the steps below: [taking into account the past previous recruitments processes⁴]:

- The recruitment process will start as soon as possible after the Chair of the Standing Committee has communicated that the Secretary General is ending his/her employment.
- The process will take place virtually and using English as its working language, and should be completed such that a decision regarding the candidate recommended by the Recruitment Committee can be made by the Standing Committee at an ordinary or extraordinary meeting. Thereafter, the final part of the recruitment (terms of contract, etc.) will proceed.
- The Recruitment Committee is to be formed by up to two Contracting Parties representing each regional group under the Convention, [preferably members of the Management Working Group, and/or Standing Committee], including the host of the next Conference of the Contracting Parties.
- The Recruitment Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the Standing Committee. The Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee will act as vice-chair for the Recruitment Committee.

[The Recruitment Committee's regional representatives will conduct consultations with entire Regional Groups [as soon as the Committee is established] [before the candidate interview process] begins in order to solicit input on Contracting Parties' priorities in a new Secretary general.]

[The regional groups will be encouraged to submit ideally 1-3 interview questions that will be asked to each candidate during the interview process.]

- While the Secretariat is not to be involved in the selection process, it will send the diplomatic note announcing the vacancy and provide the necessary administrative support for the proper functioning of the Recruitment Committee.
- The recruitment process will be supported by an executive search firm, to be proposed by IUCN Human Resources and selected by the Recruitment Committee.

³ For examples of documents mentioned in the decision, see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/examples-documents-used-2022-secretary-general-recruitment>.

⁴ For examples of documents mentioned in the decision, see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/examples-documents-used-2022-secretary-general-recruitment>.

- The recruitment process including the fees of the executive search firm will be financed with adequate funding of the Convention budget. The Subgroup on Finance will prepare a proposed amendment to the budget and present it to the Standing Committee for its decision.
- The IUCN will be in charge of the recruitment procedure, under the supervision of the Chair [or the Vice-Chair in case of the Chair's absence] of the Standing Committee, while reporting to the Recruitment Committee, will have, *inter alia*, the following tasks:
 - a. to propose the schedule for the recruitment process for approval by the Recruitment Committee;
 - b. to coordinate the approval by the Recruitment Committee of the terms of reference for the post of the Secretary General and post the vacancy online via the IUCN website recruitment portal;
 - c. Prepare the confidentiality agreement in respect of the recruitment of the Secretary General for the Recruitment Committee to sign, enabling its members to take part in the closed meetings and receive confidential information;
 - d. Propose the terms of reference for the search firm to the Recruitment Committee, publish a call for proposals from firms, submit three finalists for its selection, and contract the chosen firm; and
 - e. Provide information to the Recruitment Committee on each step of the recruitment as a link with the firm and follow-up on the recruitment schedule until the recruitment is finalized.

[f. Ensure that the references of the candidate are vetted by the recruitment firm.]

[The Recruitment Committee and IUCN will notify all Contracting Parties of the following steps when they begin and conclude: a) vacancy posting b) close of application submissions and review of applications c) beginning of interview process d) end of interview process e) second round of interviews f) selection forthcoming]

- The Recruitment Committee will make its recommendation for the new Secretary General [following consultations between the members of the Committee and the respective regional representatives to the Standing Committee and regions, and that such a recommendation is to be presented] at the next ordinary or extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee, [including providing reasoning behind the Recruitment Committee selection for the Standing Committee's] for its consideration and decision.

[The Standing Committee decides that for the purposes of interpreting the paragraph above the Standing Committee will consider itself properly consulted if all the following actions have been undertaken:

(a) the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, presents to the Standing Committee an initial proposal for the terms of reference for the selection of a new Secretary General, containing the criteria to guide the recruitment process;

(b) The Standing Committee is given adequate time, which should not be less than one month, to consider the proposed terms of reference through regional consultations, and conveys its views to the

Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee; the views conveyed should be made available to the members of the Standing Committee;

(c) Should the case arise, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, shall justify the reasons, in writing, for not incorporating any of the suggestions submitted by the Standing Committee into the final version of the terms of reference;

(d) Following the establishment of a transparent process for recruitment open to nominations by all Parties, and a selection process resulting in a recommendation to the Standing Committee, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, informs the Standing Committee on a potential nominee, indicating why the candidate is believed to best meet the criteria, including vis-à-vis other shortlisted candidates;

(e) The Standing Committee is given adequate time, which should not be less than one month, to consider the proposed nomination;

(f) If there is no consensus in the Standing Committee, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, is to inform the Recruitment Committee that the proposed nomination should not be carried out and that the selection process should continue until the Standing Committee is presented with a proposed nomination that it deems consensual;

(g) Considering its formal role in the appointment process, the Standing Committee must receive from the Recruitment Committee, in a timely manner, all information necessary for its consideration. If the Standing Committee seeks additional clarification on any issue, this should be provided by the Chair of the Standing Committee and, where applicable, by IUCN;

(h) Considering that all members of the Standing Committee are expected to engage with their constituencies throughout the process, the Chair of the Standing Committee, acting as Chair of the Recruitment Committee, and, where applicable, IUCN should also transmit to the Standing Committee the relevant information in a format that, while respecting the confidentiality rules that apply to recruitment processes, will allow for its circulation to national focal points for the Convention.]

- The new Secretary General should commence duty, if at all possible, at such a date so as to provide for a handover period of ten working days-.]