

Roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. review and approve the draft resolution in the present document to be forwarded for consideration at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
- ii. note that paragraphs 6 and 8 of Annex 1 and paragraph 5 of Annex 3 to the draft resolution replace outstanding Decisions reported in Document SC64 Doc.8, which can be considered “implemented” and removed from the list of “outstanding” decisions in accordance with Decision SC63-18.

Resolution XV.x

Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention on Wetlands

1. RECOGNIZING the value of keeping under periodic review the responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee so as to ensure that the work of the Committee continues to be delivered in as effective and cost-efficient a manner as possible;
2. RECALLING that in Resolution IX.24 (2005), on *Improving management of the Ramsar Convention*, the Conference of the Contracting Parties established a Management Working Group reporting to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
3. AWARE that the Standing Committee’s oversight of the Secretariat is conducted on its behalf between meetings of the Committee by its Executive Team (the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance) with the Secretary General;
4. RECOGNIZING the role of the Standing Committee in recommending draft resolutions to be discussed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
5. EXPRESSING APPRECIATION to the members of the Executive Team and the Management Working Group for their work; and
6. NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the steady improvement in performance, management and optimization of resources by the Secretariat over the past triennium;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. EXPRESSES its gratitude to the outgoing Chair and members of the Standing Committee for their support and willingness to provide additional oversight over the activities and the implementation of the Convention during the 2023-2025 triennium;
8. EXPRESSES its gratitude to the Contracting Parties that will serve as the Chair and members of the Standing Committee following the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15), for their willingness to take on the responsibility to govern the activities and the implementation of the Convention for the coming triennium;
9. ALSO EXPRESSES its satisfaction with improvements made by the Secretariat in performance, management and optimization of resources, and its full support for the efforts of the Secretary General in this regard;
10. ADOPTS the text in Annexes 1 to 4, based upon amendments that update Resolution XIV.2 on *The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Ramsar Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Ramsar Convention*; and
11. CONFIRMS that the present Resolution and its annexes supersede those adopted as Resolution XIV.2, which is replaced by the present Resolution.

Annex 1

The responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention

1. Considering that it is useful for the effective functioning of the Convention on Wetlands that Contracting Parties have a clear process for the operation of its Standing Committee, in Resolution VII.1 (1999) the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) adopted guidelines on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and the regional categorization of countries under the Convention. Since then and until Resolution XIV.2 (2022), the Parties have amended that text and the list of countries and Contracting Parties assigned to each of the six regional groups of the Convention in order to bring them up to date.
2. The Convention on Wetlands has the following regional groups:
 - Africa;
 - Asia;
 - Europe;
 - Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - North America; and
 - Oceania.
3. Contracting Parties and States that are eligible to accede to the Convention are assigned to the above regional groups, but Contracting Parties that are geographically near to the boundaries of the allocated region, as given in Annex 2, may, at their own request, participate in the activities of a neighbouring alternative regional group, while remaining a member of their allocated geographical regional group, upon formal notification of this intent to the COP.¹
4. The composition of the Standing Committee will be determined by means of a proportional system, by which each regional group listed in paragraph 2 above will be represented by voting members in the Standing Committee according to the following criteria:
 - a. one representative for regional groups with one to 12 Contracting Parties;
 - b. two representatives for regional groups with 13 to 24 Contracting Parties;
 - c. three representatives for regional groups with 25 to 36 Contracting Parties;
 - d. four representatives for regional groups with 37 to 48 Contracting Parties; and
 - e. five representatives for regional groups with 49 to 60 Contracting Parties.
5. The host countries of the previous and next meetings of the COP are also voting members of the Standing Committee.
6. The regional representatives and their alternate Party representatives will be elected by the COP on the basis of nominations received from the regional groups established in paragraph 2 above. Initial consideration of nominations by regional groups will be undertaken at any intersessional regional meetings that take place, and nominations will be finalized by regional groups in their regional meetings at the COP venue, preferably early during the meeting of the COP, so that appointments of the new members of the Standing Committee can be made as

¹ See resolution X1.19. "Participate" is defined in this context as different from membership within the alternative region. Participation confers to the state the right to be present in meetings, to speak, to exchange information, to submit reports, to cooperate on a scientific and practical level, and to contribute to joint projects. It does not include the right to be a representative of this alternative region nor to participate in the nomination of its representative(s). It does not confer the right to vote within the alternative region.

early as possible in the COP proceedings, permitting the new members of the Committee to participate as observers in Conference Bureau meetings during the COP.

7. Each region may nominate an alternate member for each nominated member with full power to represent the region, in the case that the representative member is unable to participate in a meeting of the Standing Committee.
8. To establish continuity in Standing Committee subgroups, the past Chair and/or Co-Chair of a subgroup are encouraged to be a member of the Subgroup in the following triennium.
9. The terms of office of the regional representatives will commence at the close of the meeting of the COP at which they have been elected and will expire at the close of the next ordinary meeting of the COP, and each Contracting Party may serve on the Standing Committee for a maximum of two consecutive terms.
10. Contracting Parties that are voting members of the Standing Committee will convey to the Secretariat, through their diplomatic channels, the name(s) of the officer(s) in the designated national Administrative Authority who will act as their delegates on the Standing Committee, as well as the names of their substitutes, should they be needed.
11. The Contracting Party acting as host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat will continue to have the status of permanent observer in the Standing Committee. If the host country of the institutional host of the Secretariat is elected as a member of the Standing Committee representing its regional group, it will have voting status for that triennium in lieu of its permanent observer status.
12. The Secretariat will, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, notify all Contracting Parties of the date and agenda of meetings of the Standing Committee, so that they may, as appropriate, make arrangements to be represented at the meeting as observers.
13. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) will be invited as an observer to Standing Committee meetings, as well as other experts and/or institutions that the Standing Committee may deem appropriate for assisting in its consideration of particular agenda items.
14. The United Nations and its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as any State not a Contracting Party to the Convention, and the international organizations that are official International Organization Partners in the work of the Convention, will be invited to participate as observers in meetings of the Standing Committee.
15. The Contracting Parties in regional groups with one representative in the Standing Committee will use a rotation system for the nomination of their regional representative. In regional groups with two or more representatives the selection will be made in such a manner as to achieve a balance in relation to biogeographical, geopolitical and cultural considerations.
16. At its first meeting immediately after the close of a meeting of the COP, the Standing Committee will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair, as well as the members and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance established by Resolution VI.17 (1996).
17. The Standing Committee will normally meet once each year, normally at the seat of the Convention Secretariat, according to the indicative schedule provided as Annex 4 to this

Resolution. The Standing Committee will meet immediately after the close of each regular meeting of the COP.

18. Within the policies agreed by the Conference of the Parties, the functions of the Standing Committee will be to:
 - a. carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval and noting that the Standing Committee is not mandated either to take decisions that would normally be taken by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or to amend any decision taken by the Conference of the Parties;
 - b. oversee the preparation of documents, including *inter alia* draft resolutions and recommendations, for consideration at the next COP;
 - c. supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Parties, the implementation of activities by the Secretariat, the execution of the Secretariat's budget, and conduct of the Secretariat's programmes;
 - d. provide guidance and advice to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
 - e. act as Conference Bureau at meetings of the COP in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
 - f. establish subgroups and working groups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of the Convention's work;
 - g. promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - h. approve the work plan of the STRP on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
 - [i. determine the Award categories and eligibility criteria for each cycle of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards, approve the nomination process and decide the Award recipients in a closed session after receiving the recommendations of the Subgroup on COP;]
 - [j. Within the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, take a decision regarding the candidate recommended by the Recruitment Committee; and]
 - k. report to the COP on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.
19. The tasks of the regional representatives elected to serve in the Standing Committee are contained in Annex 3 of this document.

20. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, will take into consideration, within available resources, the need for interpretation at its subgroup meetings when it is requested by its members.
21. The Contracting Parties and the Secretariat will endeavour to secure additional voluntary funding to enable simultaneous interpretation at meetings of the Subgroup on Finance and the Subgroup on COP.
22. The Standing Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, will be governed, *mutatis mutandis*, by the Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Conference.

Annex 2

Allocation of Contracting Parties and non-party States to the six regional groups

NOTE: Names of countries in capital and bold letters denote Contracting Parties to the Convention at the time of approval of this Resolution.

AFRICA:

ALGERIA	LIBERIA
ANGOLA	LIBYA
BENIN	MADAGASCAR
BOTSWANA	MALAWI
BURKINA FASO	MALI
BURUNDI	MAURITANIA
CABO VERDE	MAURITIUS
CAMEROON	MOROCCO
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	MOZAMBIQUE
CHAD	NAMIBIA
COMOROS	NIGER
CONGO	NIGERIA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	RWANDA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE
DJIBOUTI	SENEGAL
EGYPT	SEYCHELLES
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	SIERRA LEONE
Eritrea	Somalia
ESWATINI	SOUTH AFRICA
Ethiopia	SOUTH SUDAN
GABON	SUDAN
GAMBIA	TOGO
GHANA	TUNISIA
GUINEA	UGANDA
GUINEA-BISSAU	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
KENYA	ZAMBIA
LESOTHO	ZIMBABWE

ASIA:

Afghanistan

BAHRAIN

BANGLADESH

BHUTAN

Brunei Darussalam

CAMBODIA

CHINA

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

INDIA

INDONESIA

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

IRAQ

JAPAN

JORDAN

KAZAKHSTAN

KUWAIT

KYRGYZSTAN

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

LEBANON

MALAYSIA

Maldives

MONGOLIA

MYANMAR

NEPAL

OMAN

PAKISTAN

PHILIPPINES

Qatar

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Saudi Arabia

Singapore

SRI LANKA

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

TAJIKISTAN

THAILAND

TURKMENISTAN

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

UZBEKISTAN

VIET NAM

YEMEN

EUROPE:

**ALBANIA
ANDORRA
ARMENIA
AUSTRIA
AZERBAIJAN
BELARUS
BELGIUM
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BULGARIA
CROATIA
CYPRUS
CZECHIA
DENMARK
ESTONIA
FINLAND
FRANCE
GEORGIA
GERMANY
GREECE
Holy See
HUNGARY
ICELAND
IRELAND
ISRAEL
ITALY
LATVIA**

**LIECHTENSTEIN
LITHUANIA
LUXEMBOURG
MALTA
MONACO
MONTENEGRO
NETHERLANDS, KINGDOM OF THE
NORTH MACEDONIA
NORWAY
POLAND
PORTUGAL
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
ROMANIA
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
San Marino
SERBIA
SLOVAKIA
SLOVENIA
SPAIN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
TÜRKIYE
UKRAINE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND
NORTHERN IRELAND**

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

ARGENTINA

BAHAMAS

BARBADOS

BELIZE

BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)

BRAZIL

CHILE

COLOMBIA

COSTA RICA

CUBA

Dominica

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ECUADOR

EL SALVADOR

GRENADA

GUATEMALA

Guyana

Haiti

HONDURAS

JAMAICA

NICARAGUA

PANAMA

PARAGUAY

PERU

Saint Kitts and Nevis

SAINT LUCIA

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

SURINAME

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

URUGUAY

VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)

NORTH AMERICA:

CANADA

MEXICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OCEANIA:

AUSTRALIA

Cook Islands

FIJI

KIRIBATI

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Micronesia (Federated States of)

Nauru

NEW ZEALAND

Niue

PALAU

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

SAMOA

Solomon Islands

Timor-Leste

Tonga

Tuvalu

VANUATU

Annex 3

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as regional representatives in the Standing Committee

The Contracting Parties that are elected as regional representatives on the Standing Committee will have the following tasks:

1. To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as regional representatives, and to make every effort to ensure that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee.
2. When there is more than one regional representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other regional representative(s).
3. To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions, and of attending regional or international meetings, to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one regional representative, they will agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each regional representative or whether any of them are to have the main responsibility for certain issues for the whole region.
4. To solicit the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee.
5. Meetings of regional groups between meetings of the Conference of the Parties are encouraged. The Secretariat, in liaison with regional representatives, will determine the time, modality and agenda of regional meetings.
6. To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee.
7. To provide advice as requested by the Chair of the Standing Committee, the chairs of subgroups, or the Secretariat of the Convention.
8. In the regions concerned, to make efforts to encourage other countries to accede to the Convention.
9. To be current in the payment of voluntary contributions to serve as an example to Contracting Parties, and to engage Parties from their respective regions with outstanding contributions to encourage them to identify appropriate options to rectify the situation.
10. If members of the Subgroup on Finance, to encourage Parties in the region which they represent to pay on time their annual contributions to the Convention.

Tasks and responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee:

11. The Chair and Vice-Chair provide guidance to the Secretariat with regard to preparations for, and conduct of, meetings of the Standing Committee.

12. The Chair will declare the opening and closing of meetings of the Committee, preside at the sessions of the meeting, ensure the observance of the Rules of Procedure, rule on points of order, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote, and announce decisions.
13. During the course of a debate, the Chair may announce the list of speakers, and with the consent of the meeting, declare the list closed. The Chair may, however, accord the right of reply to any representative if a speech delivered after the list has been closed makes this desirable. The Chair may propose limitations on the time to be allowed to speakers, and on the number of times each Standing Committee member or observer may speak on a question, the adjournment or the closure of the debate, and the suspension or the adjournment of a session.
14. The Chair may declare a session of the meeting open and permit the debate to proceed if at least one-third of the Contracting Party members of the Standing Committee are present, and may have decisions taken when representatives of at least two-thirds of the Contracting Party members are present and voting.
15. The Chair, in the exercise of the functions of that office, remains under the authority of the Standing Committee.
16. The Chair and the Vice-Chair will participate in meetings in that capacity and will not at the same time exercise the rights of a representative of a Contracting Party. The Party concerned will designate another representative who will be entitled to represent the Party in the meeting and to exercise the right to vote.
17. If the Chair is absent from a session or any part thereof, the Vice-Chair will replace the Chair.

Annex 4

Indicative schedule for Standing Committee intersessional meetings for the 2025-2028 triennium

NOTE: This schedule is predicated on future cycles being three calendar years, based on the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) taking place in July 2025.

	General timelines, post COP15	2025-2028-triennium
Meeting immediately following the COP	July 2025	July 2025
First full meeting	7-9 months after COP15	SC67 – Q2 2026
Second full meeting	21 months after COP15	SC68 – Q1 2027
Third full meeting	6 months before COP16	SC69 – Q3 or Q4 2027
Pre-COP meeting	Immediately prior to COP16, at COP venue	SC70 – Q2 or Q3 2028