

Report of the Youth Working Group

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the progress of the Youth Working Group (YWG), which held its seventh meeting during this reporting period, and which has progressed a number of workplan tasks including creating guidance for appointing a Youth Focal Point and others; and
- ii. consider the scope of future work for a potential successor working group to the YWG, during the 2025-2028 triennium.

Background

1. Resolution XIV.12 on *Strengthening Ramsar connections through youth* requested the Standing Committee to establish the Youth Working Group (YWG), with a mandate to advise on mainstreaming youth engagement in the governance, programmes of work, and other activities of the Convention.
2. Between SC61 and SC63, the YWG held six virtual meetings including three virtual youth engagement workshops, to consult with young people globally. The youth workplan was developed during these meetings and was published online in March 2024, following approval in that same month. At the sixth meeting of the YWG, five subgroups were formed to manage the implementation of the youth workplan.

Seventh meeting of the YWG

3. The seventh meeting of the YWG was held virtually on 8 August 2024, with YWG members, observers, and subgroup facilitators invited. The aim of the meeting was to tighten the structure of the YWG and report on subgroup progress.
4. The Chair revisited the YWG operation and mandate, calling for volunteers for the rapporteur position, as well as the liaison/observer roles on other Convention Working Groups such as the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel and the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening.

5. The Chair introduced the proposal of new Terms of Reference for the YWG, to be included in the new youth resolution at COP15. The Chair requested feedback from the YWG on the following proposed changes:
 - Reconsider the age range of members of the YWG;
 - Appoint four Youth Focal Points per region – 20 representatives in total for the YWG;
 - Limit the number of representatives to 1-2 per NGO;
 - Include the section “Youth Workplan Implementation” outlining the responsibilities of the YWG versus the wider youth network;
 - Include the section “Modus operandi”.
6. The Secretariat introduced a new YWG SharePoint for file sharing.
7. The subgroup facilitators reported on the progress of their subgroup workplan tasks including:
 - a. Subgroup 1: Online Community Platform – the funding contract for establishing the platform nears completion (due September 2024), and the structure, hosts and access requirements are established.
 - b. Subgroup 2: Create a program of engagement – a plan has been developed with five steps including social media campaign; participants invited to join by YWG, the wider youth network and all Contracting Parties; creating instructional guidance; accessing education networks by mailing lists or groups.
 - c. Subgroup 3: Build the interface with other youth organisations – a stakeholder map has been created with 91 organisations identified, differentiating them between youth-led and youth constituency, and identifying their level of interest and influence.
 - d. Subgroup 4: Know which spaces to be in – updates included the proposal for a presentation about youth-washing; the COP15 youth side event theme of showcasing youth-led initiatives in wetlands conservation and wise use; and the organisation of potential wetlands youth side events at other conferences including CBD COP16, UNFCCC COP29, IUCN Regional Conservation Forums, and the Global Nature Positive Summit.
 - e. Subgroup 5: Empower youth to “BE” in negotiating and decision-making spaces - the Australian Government has confirmed CHF 20,000 to fund youth attendance at COP15 and invites other Contracting Parties to contribute funding.
8. As the liaison of the Strategic Plan Working Group, the Chair provided an update about the inclusion of youth in the draft Fifth Strategic Plan and called for feedback and suggestions for potential youth-focused indicators. Suggestions included the proportion of Contracting Parties with Youth Focal Points, the number of Contracting Parties to include youth in national policies, and the number of young people participating in the COPs or Standing Committees.
9. The Secretariat provided the update that the consultancy to support governance and strategic workplan tasks had been opened for expressions of interest and shared the online tender link. After three weeks of being open, the tender deadline was extended for another two weeks with a closing date of 8 September 2024 to attract more applications, and social media posts were made.

SPREP Pacific Youth Wetlands Coordinator position

10. In September 2024, a Pacific Youth Wetlands Coordinator was appointed in the Young Professionals Programme at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The role is funded by a voluntary contribution from the Australian Government, aimed at supporting the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands in the Pacific Islands (Oceania) region particularly for youth engagement and establishing a youth network.

Youth Focal Points

11. At present, 14 Contracting Parties have appointed Youth Focal Points (YFPs) in accordance with paragraph 13i of Resolution XIV.12. As per workplan task 1.4.5, the Chair created guidance for Contracting Parties on how to appoint and engage a YFP, and suggested responsibilities and activities for the YFP. The guidance was shared with all Contracting Parties, while new YFPs were invited as observers of the YWG to a YFP-specific introductory meeting on 30 September 2024.

Eighth Meeting of the YWG

12. The eighth meeting of the YWG took place virtually on 2 October 2024, with the agenda including discussions on the proposed content and timeline of a draft resolution (DR) on youth for COP15; and an update on a consultancy to support the work of the YWG.

Future work of the YWG

13. The Chair of the YWG would like to propose the extension of the YWG for the next triennium following COP15. The reinvigorated YWG would continue the implementation of the Youth Workplan, in addition to new successive tasks, identified by the consultancy and through consultation with stakeholders and Contracting Parties. The Chair also welcomes Parties to start considering the scope of the future work of a successor to the YWG and identify pathways to support this work.

Annex 1

Youth Workplan progress report

NB: Refer to Youth Workplan for full task details: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/YWG_Workplan_2024_e.pdf

Tasks	% COMPLETE	Metric/s for reporting	Result	Other notes
1.1.1: Create an online community platform that is free to join and be accessed via phone or computer	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform set up – Yes/No 	Yes	Contract between Living Lakes and the Austrian Government Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management to fund the establishment of a Mighty Networks account finalised September, platform established October 2024.
1.1.2: Secure and allocate ongoing platform funding	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding allocated and secured until the end of the triennium – Yes/No 	Yes	Funding secured from the Austrian Government Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management for 4 years.
1.1.3: Set access requirements/ restrictions and other safety protocols	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access requirements/restrictions set up – Yes/No Number of safety breaches 	Yes N/A	Plans developed – yet to be implemented.
1.1.4: Design the structure of the platform	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform structure designed – Yes/No 	Yes	Platform structure designed – yet to be implemented.
1.1.5: Assign the platform host/s and admin/s	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role description(s) created – Yes/No Platform host/s and admin/s assigned until the end of the triennium – Yes/No 	Yes Yes	Role description created. Three co-hosts appointed. Proposed rotating roster of 6-12 months (TBC).
1.1.6: Design and develop content for the platform	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content design created – Yes/No 	No	To be completed when platform is established.
1.2.1: Create a plan for engaging youth (young professionals and volunteers) to join the platform	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of youth users that join the platform 	N/A	Subgroup 2 have developed a plan for engagement – to be implemented when platform is established.
1.3.1: Set up an opt-in mentorship scheme for young wetland professionals	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of mentor and mentees Number of mentorship meetings 	N/A N/A	Living Lakes have an existing mentorship programme that can be directed to a wider youth network.

Tasks	% COMPLETE	Metric/s for reporting	Result	Other notes
1.4.1: Create a stakeholder map of relevant youth organisations	90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder map created and put on the platform with links – Yes/No 	No	Subgroup 3 developed a combined contact database and stakeholder map. Need to link organisation website when online platform is established.
1.4.2: Create a contact database with focal point contacts from each youth organisation	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact database created – Yes/No 	Yes	Subgroup 3 developed a combined contact database and stakeholder map. Ongoing task - need to update regularly as new contacts are known.
1.4.3: Organise meeting(s) with key youth organisations to understand each other's objectives, interests and activities as well as where our work overlaps, opportunities for collaboration, gaps and avoiding duplication of work	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of other youth organisations met with Number of meetings 	6 >5	Meetings had with at least 6 youth organisations (YEW, Danube Youth Council, UNEP CYMG, EAAFP Youth Taskforce, RE-PEAT, IFSA) and opportunities for collaboration identified.
1.4.4: Workshop and agree on dynamic processes for communicating and collaborating to not get swamped in bureaucracy	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process developed and governance written – Yes/No 	No	Youth organisation members to liaise between groups.
1.4.5: Establish systems/ processes to make it is easy for CPs to know how to engage with the collective of youth organisations, to enable them to bring youth into spaces	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance created for how CPs appoint a Youth Focal Point – Yes/No Guidance created and examples given for how CP Youth Focal Points can connect with other youth delegates, organisations etc – Yes/No Guidance documents shared with all CP Administrative Authorities – Yes/No 	Yes Yes Yes	YWG chair created guidance for Contracting Parties on appointing a Youth Focal Point (YFP) including key activities and examples, shared with all CPs and new YFPs. WWT developed a video using the guide and including interviews.
1.4.6: Create a list and contact database of other wetlands organisations that are interested in youth engagement	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List and contact database created – Yes/No 	No	Wetlands International have successfully established a youth project inside Wetlands International and received a green light from the management team to implement it.
1.5.1: Create dedicated channels in the online community platform for curating youth-focused messaging and communication materials	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated channel created – Yes/No 	No N/A	

Tasks	% COMPLETE	Metric/s for reporting	Result	Other notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of youth users contributing to the youth messaging channel Number of unique articles/stories produced by the network 	N/A	
1.5.2: When developing messaging, create variations of the message that appeal or cater to different target audiences	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-channels created for different target audiences for messaging – Yes/No 	No	
1.6.1: Work with the SPWG in conducting engagement and consultation of SP5 with the youth stakeholder group	70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth invited to all SP5WG meetings – Yes/No Number of SP5WG meetings attended by youth Plan for youth-specific engagement created – Yes/No Number of youth-specific consultation meetings Number of youth responding to surveys 	Yes Yes No 1 N/A	The YWG Chair (Australian Youth Focal Point) is the youth member of the SPWG and has attended most meetings, and liaised with the YWG. The SP5 consultants attended the 3rd YWG meeting to consult with youth. Several youth provided language translations of the SP5 survey into Mandarin, Japanese, Portuguese and Farsi, and shared the survey with their youth networks. No further youth engagement was conducted by the consultants. The number of youth responding to surveys not available as youth were not included as a metric in the survey.
1.6.2: Develop, with the Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG) an indicator and/or target relating to the inclusion of youth under Strategic Plan 5	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of a youth metric in Strategic Plan 5 	N/A	At the 7th YWG meeting, the Chair updated on the progress of the SPWG, highlighting that youth is currently mentioned under Goal 2 in the draft 5th Strategic Plan. The Chair invited suggestions for youth-focused indicators, such as the proportion of CPs with Youth Focal Points or the inclusion of youth in national policies. YEW suggested tracking the number of young participants at Ramsar meetings. SPWG has not yet discussed indicators.
1.6.4: Link the work of the YWG to other working groups of the Convention on Wetlands including the STRP, IAC for WCA, CEPA Oversight Panel, etc)	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth invited to all WG meetings – Yes/No 	No	YWG liaisons with other Working Groups appointed for the SPWG, IAC for WCA and STRP only.
2.1.1: YWG, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to produce guidance on which negotiating and decision-making spaces to access (and why) and share with the	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value proposition to CPs created – Yes/No 	No	Subgroup 4 proposes creating a presentation on 'youth-washing' for the YWG. Additional aspects of this task will be completed by the consultancy.

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Community of Practice over the next 2-3 years. Discuss and develop the guidance via the Community of Practice activities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on the role of youth in decision-making spaces created – Yes/No Guidance on “youth-washing” created – Yes/No Checklists and process maps created – Yes/No All guidance documents shared with all CPs – Yes/No 	No No No No	
2.1.2: Create a rolling calendar/s in the online community platform, listing strategic events for the YWG to participate, noting what sort of participation is suggested, the level of commitment/ attendance/ organisation required, etc.	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calendar created – Yes/No Number of events listed in the triennium 	No 4	Events engaged with: UNFCCC COP28, UNEA6, CBD COP16, IUCN Oceania Regional Conservation Forum, Global Nature Positive Summit.
2.1.3: Organise a youth-focused side event at the Ramsar COP15 with a specific strategy for engagement and impact required	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth-focused side event organised – Yes/No 	No	Subgroup 4 established to progress this task - proposal for the side event to feature a poster parade/ showcase of youth-led initiatives in wetland conservation and wise use in various countries.
2.2.1: Undertake research to learn from other youth engagement activities, such as in Stockholm 50, about why, how and what to bring to the table to make impact	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research analysis done – Yes/No 	No	Australia and Secretariat created project proposal and tender to hire a consultant to support this task.
2.2.2: Develop specific materials in preparation for each event that the YWG participates in, and in doing this, create templates for future events	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of templates created 	1	Australia created a presentation about the youth resolution.
2.3.1: Develop a series of ‘how to...’ capacity-building resources in collaboration with the Secretariat	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of how-to resources created 	2	Existing resources include the WWT Wetland Learning Hub; Living Lakes Academy; Flyway Youth Forum trainings; and existing YEW resources. New resources include the guide created by Australia and video created by WWT about how youth can make contact with their National Focal Points to request that they appoint a Youth Focal Point and engage further.

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2.3.2: Create a channel/library in the online community platform to publish the 'how to' resources for members to read and watch in their own time (resources in written and video formats)	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channel/library created – Yes/No 	No	
2.3.3: Host webinar sessions and capacity-building workshops presenting the resources and giving specific practice examples	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of webinar sessions and different topics 	2	The presentation about key activities for Youth Focal Points, with examples was presented in 2 webinars: one video recording by WWT (with translation in Spanish and French) and one webinar given by the YWG Chair to the new Youth Focal Points.
2.3.4: Provide guidance and training to youth delegates including role play with inter-generational mentors	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training sessions and number of participants 	0	
2.3.5: Create spaces to connect youth delegates attending the same event as well as post-event peer-to-peer learning to up-skill future youth delegates	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spaces created in the structure of the online platform – Yes/No 	No	YEW conducts post-event peer-to-peer learning.
2.3.6: Set targets to increase the number of youth delegates to Standing Committees and Conferences of the Parties including with gender, regional and diversity considerations	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SC63: SC64: at least 2 COP15: at least 5 (one for at region) Targets achieved – Yes/No 	SC63: N/A	Targets should include financial contributions to allow for youth to travel. Australia has made a voluntary contribution to fund the attendance of youth to COP15.
2.4.1: Stakeholder engagement	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder engagement tool created – Yes/No Training developed – Yes/No Number of trainings completed 	No No N/A	Living Lakes knowledge hub will provide access to material and to experts (e.g. proposal clinic).
2.4.2: Engaging with government on government-owned wetlands	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit created – Yes/No Templates created – Yes/No 	No No	

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2.4.3: Co-design with government on projects	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for CPs on co-design developed and shared with all CPs – Yes/No Create a co-design clinic on the online platform – Yes/No 	No No	
2.4.4: Leadership for today and the future	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training created to explore wetlands leadership – Yes/No Number of trainings conducted Number of participants 	No N/A N/A	
2.4.5: Proposal writing and securing finance	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a training/toolkit to support writing and securing funding – Yes/No Create a proposal clinic in the online platform – Yes/No 	No No	
2.4.6: Facilitating grass-roots engagement in communities	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a training or promote/expand an existing training such as the Living Lakes Sustainable Leadership Journeys – Yes/No Number of youth participants undertaking the training 	Yes >2	Two YEW core team members received fully funded scholarships to participate in the Living Lakes Sustainable Leadership Journey camp with youth in St. Lucia, South Africa, in September 2024. Participants engaged in insightful discussions, interactive workshops, and hands-on field experiences, all designed to empower the next generation of leaders.
2.5.1: Engage youth in schools and communities on the value of their involvement in wetlands conservation and restoration, grounded in meeting their needs to generate income and create livelihoods	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of schools engaged 	0	
2.5.2: Consider creating descriptions of the broad range of roles associated with wetlands conservation to inspire youth, CPs and other stakeholders about the	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role descriptions created – Yes/No 	No	

Tasks	% COMPLETE	Metric/s for reporting	Result	Other notes
potential for livelihoods, based on the experiences of the young people in the community				
3.1.1: Explore and support strategies to engage, collaborate with and involve youth in the implementation of the Convention	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CPs to appoint a YFP Number of CPs including youth in their country delegation to COP15 Number of wetlands policies and programmes updated to reflect youth voices 	14 N/A N/A	As of October 2024, 14 CPs have appointed Youth Focal Points: Australia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Guinea, Suriname, UAE, Uganda, Zambia
3.1.2: Develop a set of Youth Engagement Principles and examples • CPs to share their countries' examples	1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Engagement Principles developed – Yes/No Number of country examples provided 	No 1	The Australian Government has developed a set of youth engagement principles .
3.2.1: Engage CPs, NGOs and other groups in the discussion around embedding wetlands conservation and restoration into curricula with education stakeholders.	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance created for CPs, NGOs and Community groups to embed wetlands into curricula - Yes/No 	No	The RRC-EA in the Republic of Korea is establishing an Asia Wetland School Network (AWSN) in 2025.
3.3.1: Engage CPs in the discussion around recognising wetlands conservation and restoration roles as core to youth employment strategies.	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CPs engaged Guidance developed on wellbeing economy indicators and shared with all CPs – Yes/No Guidance developed and shared with all CPs – Yes/No 	0 No No	The YWG should be involved with the IAC for Wetlands City Accreditation and Mayors Roundtable idea of an internship exchange between accredited cities and the internships should be paid.
3.4.1: Produce clear guidance for CPs on how to design wetlands projects with associated financial resources, for youth employment and livelihoods.	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance produced and shared with all CPs – Yes/No Livelihoods aspects integrated into the co-design guidance – Yes/No 	No No	

Tasks	% COMPLETE	Metric/s for reporting	Result	Other notes
3.5.1: Curate insights from the Community of Practice to share with CPs about best practice examples and case studies of wetlands conservation and restoration via youth engagement.	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community of Practice insights and best practice examples shared with all CPs – Yes/No 	No	
3.5.2: Create a standard format for these insights to provide evidence-based, easy-to-use data.	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data standard format created – Yes/No 	No	
3.5.3: Keep exploring with CPs what data they need to present in negotiating and decision-making spaces, to ensure the right data is being collected.	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPs surveyed for data collection preferences – Yes/No 	0	
3.6.1: Identify and explore with CPs ways to integrate youth considerations into existing and new wetlands policies, strategies, processes and programmes	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of CPs lobbied 	TBC	CP examples to be extracted from the National Reports to COP15.
4.1.1: Draft a resolution to COP15	90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft resolution submitted – Yes/No 	TBC	Resolution drafted, and under consultation and review.