

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
63rd meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 3-7 June 2024

Decisions of the 63rd Meeting of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

Decision SC63-01: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional agenda in document SC63 Doc.2.

Agenda item 3: Adoption of the provisional working programme

Decision SC63-02: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional working programme in document SC63 Doc.3 Rev.1.

Agenda item 4: Admission of observers

Decision SC63-03: The Standing Committee admitted the observers listed in paragraph 6 of document SC63 Doc.4.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Executive Team and the Chair of the Standing Committee

Decision SC63-04: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Executive Team and Chair of the Standing Committee published as document SC63 Doc.5.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Secretary General

Decision SC63-05: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretary General published as document SC63 Doc.6.

Agenda item 26: Dates of the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee

Decision SC63-06: The Standing Committee decided to hold SC64 from 20 to 24 January 2025 in Gland, Switzerland.

Agenda item 7.1: Report of the Management Working Group: Report on the activities of the Management Working Group

Decision SC63-07: The Standing Committee took note of the report on the activities of the Management Working Group as found in document SC63 Doc.7.1.

Decision SC63-08: The Standing Committee authorized the Secretary General of the Convention to enter into new cooperation agreements with organizations that meet the criteria found in SC54 Doc.16.Rev.1. Further, the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to include this instruction in the draft resolution on synergies for consideration by COP15. This decision repeals Decision SC52-11.

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

Decision SC63-09: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group published as document SC63 Doc.11.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening

Decision SC63-10: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening and approved the next steps proposed by the Working Group.

Agenda item 21.1: Preparation of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15): Report of the Secretariat on COP15

Decision SC63-11: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretariat on COP15 as found in document SC63 Doc.21.1, including the indicative timeline of events and deadlines leading up to COP15, and approved the proposed theme and logo for COP15.

Agenda item 21.2: Preparation of COP15: Report of the Subgroup on COP15

Decision SC63-12: The Standing Committee took note of the report presented by the Chair of the Subgroup on COP15.

Agenda item 21.3: Preparation of COP15: Proposal of the Secretariat on the process for preparation and review of draft resolutions

Decision SC63-13: The Standing Committee:

- a. noted the indicative timeline for events related to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15), in paragraph 3 of document SC63 Doc. 21.3;
- b. instructed the Secretariat to share with Contracting Parties the guidance for the preparation of draft resolutions for COP15, as presented in Annex 1 and amended in plenary, with deadlines for submission updated to reflect the dates decided for the Committee's 64th meeting (SC64);
- c. approved the guidance on the Secretariat's role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, and the processes for doing so both before and after SC64, as proposed in paragraphs 7 to 10;
- d. instructed the Secretariat to follow for COP15 the process for review of draft resolutions applied at COP14, applying logistical refinements as appropriate.

Agenda item 21.4: Preparation of COP15: Proposal of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

Decision SC63-14: The Standing Committee noted the estimated budget, funding requirements and timeline for the Award nomination process and decided that awards will be presented in the following categories: the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Young Wetland Champions, the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Innovation, and the Ramsar Wetland Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award.

Agenda item 13.1: Report of the Secretariat on implementation of Resolution XIV.3: Strategy for communication with Contracting Parties (Resolution XIV.3 paragraph 11)

Decision SC63-15: The Standing Committee endorsed the proposed plan in SC63 Doc.13.1 for communication with Contracting Parties and noted that the Secretariat will apply the United Nations guidelines for gender-inclusive language in its communications.

Agenda item 13.2: Report of the Secretariat on implementation of Resolution XIV.3: Enhancing intersessional collaboration between Contracting Parties (follow-up to Standing Committee Decision SC62-18)

Decision SC63-16: The Standing Committee endorsed the tools and approach proposed in SC63 Doc.13.2 Rev.1 for enhancing intersessional collaboration between Contracting Parties.

Agenda item 8: Report of the Secretariat on the implementation of the Decisions of the Standing Committee

Decision SC63-17: The Standing Committee took note of the report prepared by the Secretariat and confirmed that the two lists of Decisions from SC24 to SC62 found at <https://www.ramsar.org/document/list-standing-committee-decisions-which-have-been-implemented-are-no-longer-effect> and at Annex 1 of document SC63 Doc.8 fulfil the first and second steps of the process approved in Decision SC62-21.

Decision SC63-18: The Standing Committee decided that the Decisions identified as “outstanding” will be presented at future meetings of the Standing Committee, as described in paragraph 4 of document SC63 Doc.8, and that Decisions identified as “implemented” will not be presented at future Standing Committee meetings. The Standing Committee recommended that, where appropriate, “outstanding” Decisions be incorporated into future Resolutions such that they can then be considered “implemented” and removed from the list of “outstanding” Decisions.

Agenda item 25: Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Decision SC63-19: The Standing Committee:

- a. took note of the annual reports submitted by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) for 2023 in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 on Ramsar Regional Initiatives;
- b. approved the proposal for a new Ramsar Regional Initiative, the Danube WILDIsland initiative, within the framework of the Convention in accordance with paragraph 27 of Resolution XIV.7, and approved the allocation of start-up funding to the Danube WILDIsland RRI from the 2024 core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” proposed in document SC63 Doc.9.1 in the amount of CHF 29,000.

Agenda item 15: Enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies in partnership with multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

Decision SC63-20: The Standing Committee took note of the progress in implementing Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions.*

Agenda item 14: Work plan of the Secretariat for 2024

Decision SC63-21: The Standing Committee took note of and approved the Secretariat's annual work plan for 2024.

Agenda item 16: Review and consolidation of current Resolutions

Decision SC63-22: The Standing Committee:

- a. approved the four draft consolidated resolutions found in documents SC63 Doc.16.2, SC63 Doc.16.3, SC63 Doc.16.4 as amended in line with the Committee's discussion, and SC63 Doc.16.5;
- b. instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft consolidated resolutions in documents SC63 Doc.16.2, SC63 Doc.16.4 as amended, and SC63 Doc.16.5 for consideration and adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its 15th meeting; and
- c. noted that the views of Contracting Parties are reflected in the report of SC63.

The Committee's Decision regarding the draft consolidated resolution in document SC63 Doc.16.3 is included in Decision SC63-24.

Agenda item 17.1: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel

Decision SC63-23: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel contained in document SC63 Doc.17.1 and instructed the Panel to continue discussion on the need and value of a new logo, including budget considerations, in consultation with interested Parties and the Secretariat, and to report on progress to SC67.

Agenda item 17.2: CEPA: Report of the Secretariat on the proposed future operations of the CEPA Oversight Panel, in accordance with Resolution XIV.8

Decision SC63-24: The Standing Committee approved the proposal of the Secretariat on the future operations of the CEPA Oversight Panel, and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution for consideration at SC64 and submission to the Conference of the Contracting Parties at COP15, reflecting the consolidation on Recommendations and Resolutions on CEPA submitted in Document SC63 Doc.16.3 and approved through Decision SC63-22, and the views of the Standing Committee on the process and timeline for nominating the Panel for the 2025-2028 triennium. The Standing Committee decided that the draft consolidated resolution on CEPA presented in Document SC63 Doc.16.3 would not be forwarded to COP15.

Agenda item 17.3: CEPA: Report of the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day 2024

Decision SC63-25: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretariat on World Wetlands Day 2024 as presented in document SC63 Doc 17.3 Rev.1.

Agenda item 17.4: CEPA: World Wetlands Day themes for 2025, 2026 and 2027

Decision SC63-26: The Standing Committee decided on the following World Wetland Day themes:
2025 – Protecting wetlands for our common future
2026 – Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage
2027 – Wetlands for sustainable cities

Agenda item 10: Urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention:
Update on wetland inventories

Decision SC63-27: The Standing Committee noted the progress of the Secretariat to provide a support mechanism to Contracting Parties in completing national wetland inventories and requested the Secretariat to pursue fundraising activities to amplify the development of the proposed mechanism.

Agenda item 9.1: Financial and budgetary matters: Report on financial matters for 2023 and 2024

Decision SC63-28: The Standing Committee:

- i. accepted the 2023 audited financial statements as of 31 December 2023;
- ii. noted the core budget results for 2023;
- iii. noted the status of the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2023;
- iv. approved the carry-forward of the pre-committed and unspent funds in amount of CHF 1,232,000 from 2023 to 2024, as included in column C of the table in Annex 1 Core Budget 2024 of document SC63 Com.1;
- v. approved the allocation of CHF 29,000 from the core budget to the Danube WILDIsland Ramsar Regional Initiative for activities in 2024, as described in paragraph 23 of document SC63 Doc.9.1;
- vi. noted the surplus balances at the end of 2023; and
- vii. noted the information regarding the financial reports for 2024 and 2025 and regarding the invoices for 2025, as described in paragraphs 26 and 27 of document SC63 Doc. 9.1.

Agenda item 9.2: Financial and budgetary matters: Status of annual contributions

Decision SC63-29: The Standing Committee:

- i. took note of the status of annual contributions;
- ii. noted the actions listed in paragraphs 12 and 13 of document SC62 Doc.9.2 on group confirmation of outstanding contributions as part of the audit process;
- iii. noted the actions listed in paragraphs 15, 17, 18 and 19 of the same document to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions by the Contracting Parties;
- iv. noted the changes in annual contributions receivable and in the annual provision against contributions receivable; and
- v. noted the status of the voluntary contributions received from the Contracting Parties in the Africa region outlined in paragraph 22 of the same document.

Agenda item 19: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel on implementation of the STRP work plan

Decision SC63-30: The Standing Committee noted the Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel as presented in SC63 Doc.19 and the comments made by Parties; requested the STRP to undertake scoping and planning for a review of the classification system of wetland type to be implemented as a high priority task in the 2025-2027 triennium; and requested the STRP, working with the Secretariat, to organize a consultation with the earth observation community on development of an initiative to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange and guidance for earth observation in support of wetland inventory, assessment, monitoring and conservation.

Agenda item 20: Technical proposal of the STRP on resourcing and implementing Waterbird Population Estimates

Decision SC63-31: The Standing Committee noted the technical proposal of the STRP on resourcing and implementing Waterbird Population Estimates as presented in SC63 Doc.20 and comments made by Parties; supported the development of the Partnership in line with the approach presented; and requested the STRP to further develop the Partnership proposal and present it to SC64, including recommendations for resourcing it in consultation with the Subgroup on Finance.

Agenda item 18: Report of the Youth Working Group

Decision SC63-32: The Standing Committee took note of the progress of the Youth Working Group as presented in SC63 Doc.18 and comments made by Contracting Parties.

Agenda item 22: Report of the Secretariat on the challenges and opportunities related to the submission and updating of Ramsar Information Sheets

Decision SC63-33: The Standing Committee decided to establish a working group to further elaborate on the priority actions presented in document SC63 Doc.22, in consultation with the Secretariat and the STRP, to inform the preparation of a draft resolution on strengthening future processes on updating the RIS. The working group will provide a report to SC64.¹

Agenda item 23: Report of the Secretariat on proposals on strengthening the process to include a Site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Decision SC63-34: The Standing Committee took note of the Secretariat's report on proposals on strengthening the process to include a site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance and comments made by Parties, and decided to revise SC63 Doc.23 for presentation at SC64 to more accurately reflect the views of the Legal Adviser, with a group of interested Parties to review the actions proposed in the document and provide additional recommendations for strengthening the process for including a site in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Agenda item 24: Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20

Decision SC63-35: The Standing Committee took note of the update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20 on the Convention's response to environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation's aggression.

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

Decision SC63-36: The Standing Committee took note of the progress report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG) and comments made by Parties on document SC63 Doc.11 Rev.1, and welcomed the progress made by the SPWG in Annex 3 of that document, with amended language, as a basis for continued discussions to work towards a draft resolution for COP15.

¹ On 30 September 2024, through Post-SC63 Intersessional Decision 01, the Standing Committee approved the terms of reference of the Working Group on RIS Updating.

Agenda item 7.2: Report of the Management Working Group: Report on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General

Decision SC63-37: The Standing Committee took note of the views expressed regarding the process for recruiting a new Secretary General and requested SC64 to continue discussions on this matter on the basis of the annex to document SC63 Doc.7.2 Rev.1.