

Swedish suggestion to amend the Rules of Procedure

Introduction

The task to update the Rules of Procedure was part of the Res 13.4, where the Contracting Parties was “NOTING the value in reviewing the Rules of Procedure to identify any inconsistencies or other elements that may negatively impact the work of the Convention or that might usefully be amended to optimize resources and/or increase efficiency” and requested the Secretariat and the Standing Committee to prepare for an update at COP14. Unfortunately, the work was stopped due to the impact of the Covid restrictions. Sweden has during earlier meetings (SC and MWG) during this triennium asked for a decision on that the process would be re-established so that there can be an update of the Rules of Procedure done during COP15. Delegates have been reluctant to establish a working group or work on-line together on the issue this triennium. Sweden has therefore made an own proposal on how to update the document. The changes described in general terms are listed below.

Suggested actual changes to the content;

- New decision process for where the next COP is to be held. First step at the COP with a decision on host country and year. Then the SC later on makes decisions on venue and exact dates. Also adding how to deal with a decision when there is no invite received from a possible host country. Also adding new rules for how to postpone a COP and/or move them to other another venue if there are extraordinary circumstances preventing it to take place as planned.
- Suggesting additional and changes rules for arranging extraordinary COPs, making them more flexible for when in time it should be arranged, also adding the possibility to have on-line meeting if there are extraordinary circumstances preventing face-to-face meetings.
- Streamlining rules, we don't need different ways of voting for different issues, one way to proceed with voting (that includes the possibility to ask for closed voting etc) is enough.
- The present rules are written in a way that Conventions worked before computers and internet. The suggestion updates the text to the present way of working at COP, especially when it comes to revised draft versions and how to make them available.
- It also updates the fact that not all suggested amendments have to be read in plenum, if there are plenty of suggestions an overview can be presented and then everyone can read the wording in the next revised version of the document concerned.
- All States that aren't parties to the Convention are suggested to have proper credentials. States present must be sure about that they are talking to a representative of another State.
- Suggesting that the Secretariat can do work on credentials before the COP starts, if there are resources enough.
- Changing the timeline and procedures for the observers and the observer list.
- Change of seat order. For the SC; collecting SC representatives for a region in a way that they can easily consult each other during the meeting.

- Changes on how to prepare agenda, provisional agenda, annotated provisional agenda and work program.
- Adding info on when a rule has other kinds of rules for different bodies (mostly how COP differ from SC).
- More detailed rules against making unnecessary long speeches in plenum.
- Suggesting that CPs that have submitted a proposal and then developed it further since it was discussed at the Standing Committee can submit the new version to the pre-COP Standing Committee for a decision on if that version is a better one to start the COP negotiation from. Such Rev1 document should have track-changes for changes done.
- Rules of Procedure are to be adopted at the beginning of the COP, but now it is suggested that an additional later decision of amendments can be made. The time schedule for the process before the COP is also changed, so that all CPs and the SC can be able to see the proposal in good time before the COP.
- Clarifying that there are different kinds of observers and that they all don't have the same rights to participate.
- Improving the text on alternates and when they are to step in or not. Also suggesting what happens if both a representative and its alternate cannot participate in a meeting or have to quit their responsibility.
- Adding rules for how a CP can request order and clarification during a meeting.
- Added text on high-level segments.
- Adding a rule on totally closed meetings, including observing CPs.

Improving the language and structure without changing the content at all, or very little

- Using the same words consequently in the document, avoiding a number of synonyms.
- Excluding the use of ambiguous terms and word.
- Having definitions that corresponds to how the words are used in the text.
- Using acronyms when the acronyms are widely used in normal communication.
- Replacing words that may not be understood by someone not having a Ramsar language as the mother tongue.
- Using number of days or week instead of months and year when an exact time frame is necessary. Sometimes using hours instead of days. This to avoid misunderstandings on deadlines.
- Making the document gender neutral.
- Using the phrasing in the Convention text, in some places where the present Rules of Procedure differ from it.
- Collecting everything about some aspect in one rule instead of spreading it at several rules (for example ways to vote).
- Writing a rule/para in a chronological order (compared to some of today's long paras describing the start in a subordinate clause at the end).

Annex 1. Suggested revised Rules of Procedure

15th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

**“Protecting wetlands for our common future”
Victoria falls, Zimbabwe, 23-31 July 2025**

Ramsar COP15 Doc.x

Rules of Procedure

(As adopted by the 15th Conference of the Parties)

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

INTRODUCTION

Rule 1 Purpose

These Rules of Procedure shall apply to any kind of meeting of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) convened in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention, subject to their adoption at the COP.

Rule 2 Definitions

1. Definitions used in these Rules:
 - a) “Convention” means the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, adopted in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971, as amended by the Protocol signed in Paris, France, on 3 December 1982, and by the Extraordinary COP held in Regina, Canada, on 28 May 1987;
 - b) “CP” (Contracting Party) or “CPs” (Contracting Parties) means a State or States that have consented to be bound by the Convention and for which it is in force;

- c) “COP” refers to “Conference of the Parties” or the more formal wording Conference of the Contracting Parties as established in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention;
- d) “Extraordinary COP” refers to the possibility to have an extraordinary COP according with Article 6 of the Convention;
- e) “Session” refer to any kind of whole meeting or a certain part of a meeting;
- f) “Intersessionally” refer to the time between a certain type of meetings;
- g) The “Conference Bureau” means the body which provides oversight and guidance during COPs;
- h) “Officer and Officers” refers to an individual/State or individuals/States that have been appointed to have a specific task or position during the COP or in a subsidiary body;
- i) “President” means the President elected by the COP that is chairing and having other responsibilities at the COP in accordance to these rules;
- j) “Secretariat” means the professional and administrative staff of the Secretariat of the Convention established under Article 8 of the Convention and any other staff under the authority of the Secretary General who serve the Convention;
- k) “Subsidiary body” means all committees, subgroups, working groups or other kinds of groups established by the COP or the Standing Committee;
- l) “Standing Committee” means the body established by Resolution 3.3 and having its work for the coming triennium decided in a resolution at each COP;
- m) “Ramsar regions” means the regions in which the CPs have been grouped in order to facilitate the work of the Convention;
- n) “Proposal” means a draft resolution or recommendation submitted by one or more CPs, the Standing Committee or the Conference Bureau;
- o) “CPs present and voting” means CPs present at the session at which voting takes place and casting an affirmative or negative vote. CPs abstaining from voting or who do not have appropriate credentials is considered as not voting.

COP AND EXTRAORDINARY COP

Rule 3 Preparations for the coming COP

1. As stated in the Convention text, article 6, ordinary COPs shall be held at intervals of not more than three years, unless the COP decides otherwise.
2. Each COP decides on the host country for the next COP and determines which year it is to take place.

3. Any CP offer itself to host a COP, should provide a formal written invitation. The invite is encouraged to include a hosting rationale, the proposed location and if possible, also the venue, the approximate time for the COP and suggested financial resources as appropriate to support the event. The invite should be issued by the Head of State or Government or the Cabinet or the Minister of Foreign Affairs of that country and sent to the Secretariat at least four weeks prior to the conclusion of the previous COP.
4. If more than one CP issues an invitation to host the next COP, it is advised to have informal closed consultations at the COP, trying to decrease the number of invites before the decision.
5. If there is no decision on the host country for the next COP within 52 weeks from the closing of the COP, the next COP shall be held in the country where the Secretariat has its seat, unless other appropriate arrangements are made by the Secretariat and accepted by the Standing Committee.
6. The exact dates and duration of each COP shall be established by the Standing Committee in good time before the future COP, preferably at its first substantive meeting after each COP, on the basis of consultations between the Secretariat and the host country of the next COP.
7. The responsibility for detailed planning and preparations are done by the host country, the subgroup on planning the next COP, the Secretariat and the Standing Committee.
8. In the case of extraordinary circumstances the Standing Committee, after consultation with the host country, may have to decide to postpone a COP, or having it moved to another country, city and/or venue.

Rule 4 Preparations for an extraordinary COP

1. A COP can decide upon if an extraordinary COP is necessary and when and where it is to take place.
2. Intersessionally a CP can make a written request asking other CPs for their support, via the Secretariat, for an extraordinary COP. The request should include approximative dates for such meeting. Under extra-ordinary circumstances, that prevents meeting face-to-face, an on-line meeting can be suggested. The request should also include a suggested agenda for the meeting. The request can, but don't have to include a suggested venue for meeting.
3. The Secretariat is responsible for collecting the answers and compiling the results on support. Provided that, within eight weeks of such communication, the request is supported by at least one third of the CPs, the Standing Committee and the Secretariat makes the necessary decisions to arrange an extraordinary COP in line with the proposal.

Rule 5 Notifications and list of observers

1. For an ordinary COP the Secretariat shall notify all CPs at least 52 weeks before the COP is due to commence. The notification shall include information about the dates and venue for the COP, the draft agenda for the COP and the deadline for submission of proposals by the CPs. The notification should also include if there is a high-level segment planned and during what dates, or not. The notification shall also include if there is going to be seat limitations

restricting the numbers of participants at the venue and/or seat places in plenum.

2. For an extraordinary COP The Secretariat shall notify all CPs of the dates, venue, and provisional agenda of an extraordinary COP within four weeks after recognizing the support for such COP. The notification will also include where to find the documents for meeting and the deadline for the documents being available.
3. The Secretariat shall also notify the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as any State not a CP to the Convention, of meetings of the COP so that they may be represented as observers. The content of the notification will be according to the Rule 5 para 1 or 2. The notification will be sent at least 52 weeks before the COP is due to commence.
4. The Secretariat shall notify those of the date and venue of the COP so that they may be represented as observers. The content of the notification to the earlier recognised observers will be according to Rule 5 para 1 or 2. The notification will be sent at least 52 weeks before the COP is due to commence.
5. The list of observers shall be provided by the Secretariat to the CPs not later than two weeks before the COP commence at which they are proposed to be admitted. The list of observers shall indicate the organization, body or agency interested in being observers.

Rule 6 Proposals

1. Proposals shall be submitted to the Secretariat eight weeks prior to the opening of the Standing Committee meeting at which recommendations are made for proposals for consideration at the COPs.
2. Only CPs and the Standing Committee shall be entitled to submit proposals. Others may find a CP to sponsor and submit their proposal.
3. The Conference Bureau is entitled to submit proposals during the COP, as well as adding a new proposal from a CP to the agenda, the latter only if a CP suggesting the proposal, due to its content, couldn't be in time to submit it before deadline for proposals.
4. The proposals shall be following the decision of the Standing Committee about how proposals are to be structured, and any provided template should be used.

OBSERVERS

Rule 7 Observer's participation in meetings

1. All States that are not CPs and any organisation, national or international, whether governmental or non-governmental, qualified in fields relating to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, can ask to be recognised as observers.
2. States and organisations desiring to receive recognition as observers for the purposes of attending a COP or a Standing Committee meeting shall submit appropriate documentation to the Secretariat for consideration at least eight weeks prior to the meeting. For other meetings, including extraordinary COPs, at least four weeks prior to a meeting will suffice.

3. States and organisations already recognized as observers who desire to be represented at a meeting as observers shall submit the names of these representatives to the Secretariat at least four weeks prior to the opening of an ordinary or extraordinary COP or a Standing Committee meeting.
4. States and organisations which has informed the Secretariat of its wish to be represented at a meeting as observers, may be represented at the meeting or some of its sessions, unless at least one third of the CP's present at the meeting or session object.
5. Limitations at the venue may require that no more than two observers from any State not a CP or an organisation be present at a COP.
6. The Secretariat will maintain a list of organisations earlier recognized as observers pursuant to this rule.

AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMMES

Rule 8 Preparation of provisional agenda for the COP

1. The Secretariat shall prepare the provisional agenda of each ordinary COP for consideration and approval by the Standing Committee. The content of the provisional agenda must be decided at least 53 weeks before the COP commence.

Rule 9 Items on provisional agenda

1. The provisional agenda of each ordinary COP shall include, as appropriate:
 - a) The election of President, an Alternate President, and two Vice-Presidents (which also shall act as Rapporteurs);
 - b) The establishment of the Credentials Committee;
 - c) The observer list, and the invite to accepted observers;
 - d) Information on housekeeping;
 - e) The report of the Secretary General on the work related to the Convention;
 - f) Items arising from the articles of the Convention;
 - g) Items of which has been decided at a previous COP or which emanate from decisions taken at a previous COP;
 - h) Items referred to in Rule 15;
 - i) Any item proposed by a CP and received by the Secretariat before the provisional agenda is approved by the Standing Committee;

- j) A comparative report on actual versus projected expenditures and human resource needs over the past triennium for the work of the Convention and the operation of the Secretariat.

Rule 10 Distribution of documents

1. The documents for an ordinary COP, including an annotated provisional agenda and a work programme based on the recommendations of the Standing Committee, shall be distributed by the Secretariat to the CPs at least twelve weeks before the opening of the COP.
2. The documents for an extraordinary COP, shall be distributed by the Secretariat to the CPs at least eight weeks before the opening of the COP.

Rule 11 Supplementary provisional agenda for a COP and the work program

1. The Secretariat shall, in agreement with the Chair of the Standing Committee, include any item, that has been proposed by a CP and has been received by the Secretariat after the annotated provisional agenda has been produced, but before the opening of the COP, in a supplementary provisional agenda. New proposals for draft resolutions that will be dealt with by the Conference Bureau as a first step, is not to be included in the agenda.

Rule 12 Examining the provisional agenda for a COP and the work program

1. The COP shall examine the provisional agenda together with any supplementary provisional agenda. When adopting the agenda, it may add, delete, defer or amend items. Only items which are considered by the COP to be urgent and important may be added to the agenda.
2. The work programme for a COP is to be planned in a way that during the days when all participating CPs have a provisional participation and the Credentials Committee haven't done their check of the credentials, the agenda is not to contain matters that may need to go to vote or to decision during those days.
3. The decision on the work programme also has to consider that it may be good to start some difficult agenda points early, so that subsidiary bodies can start their work, this to avoid that too many difficult agenda points are run in parallel during the last days of the meeting.

Rule 13 Scope of provisional agenda for an extraordinary COPs

1. The provisional agenda for an extraordinary COP shall consist only of those items proposed for consideration in the request for the holding of the extraordinary COP.

Rule 14 Secretariat's report on administrative and financial implications of agenda items

1. The Secretariat shall report, within 24 hours of the opening of the COP, on the projected administrative and financial implications of all substantive agenda items submitted to the COP and before decisions on these items are taken by the COP.

Rule 15 Automatic inclusion of unaddressed issues in the agenda of the next ordinary COP

1. Any item of the agenda of an ordinary COP, consideration of which has not been completed at the COP, shall be included automatically in the agenda of the next ordinary COP, unless otherwise decided by the COP.

REPRESENTATION AND CREDENTIALS

Rule 16 Composition of delegation

1. Each State, independently on being a CP or not, participating in a COP shall be represented by a delegation consisting of a Head of Delegation and such other accredited representatives, alternate representatives, and advisers as it may require.
2. A representative may be designated as an alternate Head of Delegation. An alternate representative or an adviser may act as a representative upon designation by the Head of Delegation.

Rule 17 Submission of credentials

1. The original of the statement of credentials of the Head of Delegation and other representatives, alternate representatives, and advisers (specifying the individual named as the Head of Delegation) shall be submitted to the Secretariat, not later than 48 hours after the opening of the COP. Any later change in the composition of the delegation shall immediately be submitted in the same way.
2. Any changes that can be decided by the delegations, shall be submitted to the Secretariat or to the Regional Representative on the Credentials Committee. Any changes to the Head of the Delegation during the COP may be made by the current Head of Delegation, alternate Head of Delegation, or the Embassy of the CP in question, provided that the newly designated Head of Delegation is properly identified as a delegate in the original credentials duly authorized by the appropriate official. If a person not identified in the initial letter of credentials is proposed as a new Head of Delegation, that change would need to be done through issuance of new credentials.
3. The credentials shall be issued either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or an equivalent person. If other authorities in a State are entitled to issue credentials for COPs, this should be notified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with an original letter to the Secretary General at the time of submitting their credentials.
4. The credentials must bear the name and position of the person who signs the credentials as well as the full signature of the appropriate authority. The used seal and/or letterhead should clearly indicate that the credentials have been issued by the appropriate authority.
5. If credentials are submitted in a language other than one of the official languages of the Convention, they shall be accompanied by a translation into one of the Convention's official languages, and the translation shall be produced and sealed or otherwise duly authorized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs or its diplomatic representation, or the office of the Head of Delegation or the office of one of the delegates whose name is listed in the credentials.

6. Submission of credentials or any update, may be done in either hardcopy or digital form, with digital submission requiring authentication by a valid digital signature.
7. CPs have the possibility to send digital copies of their credentials to the Secretariat for a preliminary pre-check before the COP.

Rule 18 Credentials Committee

1. In a way to limit the work of the Credentials Committee and the delegations at the COP the Secretariat can, if they have time, do some preparatory work for the Committee. The Secretariat may check digital copies of credentials that are sent in advance of the COP. The pre-check might result in suggestions for improvements, but the lack of such suggestions is not an acceptance of the credentials, such work is the responsibility of the credentials committee and the COP.
2. A Credentials Committee, composed of one CP from each of the Ramsar regions, elected at the first session of each ordinary COP on the basis of a proposal from the Conference Bureau, shall do the full examination of all submitted credentials and submit its report and recommendations to the COP for approval.
3. The Chair of the Credentials Committee shall be elected by the Committee from amongst its members. Holder of this post shall have equivalent powers and duties in relation to meetings of the Committee as the President of the Conference. A majority of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum. Meetings of the Committee shall be closed unless otherwise determined by the COP.

Rule 19 Provisional participation

1. Pending a decision of the COP upon their credentials, representatives shall be entitled to participate provisionally at the COP.

OFFICERS

Rule 20 Conference Bureau

1. Just before the COP commence, the Standing Committee is to prepare a proposal on the election of a President, an Alternate President, and two Vice-Presidents (one of whom shall act as Rapporteur, and the other as its alternate). In preparing its proposal on this matter, the Standing Committee shall consider first the candidates put forward by the host country of the COP for the posts of President and Alternate President of the COP and shall have due regard to the principle of equitable geographical representation, as well as rotation among the Ramsar regions. The officers are to be elected from among the representatives of the CPs present at the COP. The election will take place at the commencement of the first session of an ordinary COP.
2. The elected officers will serve as members of the Conference Bureau together with the members of the Standing Committee. The elected officers shall assume their functions as soon as they are elected. They will remain in office until their successors are duly elected at the next ordinary COP.

3. The President, the Alternate President and the Vice-Presidents together with the Standing Committee will serve as the Conference Bureau of any extraordinary COP held during their term of office.
4. No COP-officer may be re-elected for more than one consecutive term.
5. The President and the Alternate President shall participate in the COP in that capacity and shall not at the same time exercise the rights of a representative of a CP. The CP concerned shall designate another representative who shall be entitled to represent the CP at the COP and to exercise the right to vote.
 - a) The Conference Bureau shall meet at least once daily over the duration of the COP to review progress of the COP, including the draft of the report of the previous day prepared by the rapporteurs and the Secretariat, and to provide advice to the President in order to ensure the smooth development of the rest of the proceedings.
 - b) The Conference Bureau shall be chaired by the Chair of the Standing Committee for the period previous to the current COP.¹

Rule 21 Role of the President

1. In addition to exercising the powers conferred upon the President elsewhere by these Rules, the President shall declare the opening and closing of the COP, inform the CPs about by what means on how they can request order and clarification (preferably both a manual and a digital way), preside at the sessions of the COP, ensure the observance of these Rules, rule on points of order, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote, and announce decisions.
2. The President may propose to the COP the closure of the list of speakers, limitations on the time to be allowed to speakers and the number of times each CP or observer may speak on a question, the adjournment or the closure of the debate, and the suspension or the adjournment of a session.
3. The President, in the exercise of the functions of that office, remains under the authority of the COP.

Rule 22 Role of the Alternate President

1. If the President is absent from a session of any part thereof, the Alternate President shall act as President. Should both the President and Alternate President be absent, they shall designate one of the Vice-Presidents to act as President. The Alternate President or a Vice-President acting as President shall have the same powers and duties as the President.

¹ As elected at the first SC meeting immediately after the close of the COP, as established by Resolution XI.19 (COP 11 2012), at Annex I at paragraph 17.

SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Rule 23 Establishment and composition of subsidiary bodies

1. The COP may establish committees and working groups if it deems it necessary for the progress of the COP or implementation of and/or progress of the Convention. The Standing Committee can establish such bodies intersessionally.
2. When subsidiary bodies are to be established both the proper size for the group to work in an effective way, how regional representation is best done and what kind of already elected officers that are needed for a good result of the bodies work should be considered before electing its members.
3. For subsidiary bodies a CP is normally not to be part of a subsidiary body for more than two terms, but exceptions can be made if the CP volunteers for a certain office.
4. Unless otherwise decided each subsidiary body shall elect its other officers. The election of Chair, and Vice Chair or Co-chairs, shall normally be subject to rotation among the Ramsar regions.
5. The COP or when applicable the Standing Committee shall determine the matters to be considered by each subsidiary body and may authorize the President or when appropriate the Standing Committee, upon the request of the chairperson of a subsidiary body, to make adjustments to the allocation of work.
6. Any CP wishing to withdraw from a subsidiary body, should make the request in writing to the Chair of the Standing Committee through the Secretariat.
7. If an officer or a representative of a subsidiary body resigns or is otherwise unable to complete the assigned term of office or to perform the functions of the office, a representative of the same CP shall be named by the CP concerned to replace the said officer for the remainder of that officer's mandate. When there is no possible replacement by someone from the same CP, an already elected alternate from another CP will step in. If such alternate doesn't exist or isn't available, the appropriate Ramsar region will appoint a new officer.
8. If an officer or representative of a subsidiary body is temporarily unable to participate in the process of the subsidiary body, the CP concerned decides if an alternate from the same CP, or an already elected alternate from the relevant Ramsar region is to step in. Are no such alternates available and the region finds it necessary to have a representative the region will appoint someone that can step in temporarily in the subsidiary body.

Rule 24 Observers to subsidiary bodies

1. CPs that are not elected voting representatives in a subsidiary body may attend and participate in all meetings of such bodies, including any session that may be closed to other kinds of observers.
2. Organisations that are permanent observers to the Standing Committee may attend any meetings of the Conference Bureau unless any CP objects.

3. The President may invite observers that are not CPs to attend meetings of the Conference Bureau, or other meetings during the COP if required to assist proceedings.
4. A few types of meetings are closed to all kinds of observers. It is the ones where different candidates, for example for awards, certification and employments, are discussed and therefore are in a great need of secrecy.

Rule 25 The work of subsidiary bodies

1. Unless otherwise decided by the COP, or when applicable the Standing Committee, these Rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the proceedings of subsidiary bodies, except that:
 - a) Additional Rules of Procedure for subsidiary bodies may be adopted by the COP or the SC or in their Terms of References for such body.
 - b) The Chair of a subsidiary body, except for in the Standing Committee, may exercise the right to vote;
 - c) Interpretation into the official Convention languages shall be provided in sessions of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat shall endeavour to provide interpretation in other Committee or Working Group sessions, including meetings of the Conference Bureau, subject to available resources.
 - d) Unless otherwise decided, the subsidiary body include in its Terms of Reference how well in advance notification about meetings are to be posted, how well in advance documents necessary for a meeting is to be posted and how the long the minimum time for the bodies members to respond should be.
 - e) Subsidiary bodies may not take decisions that would normally be taken by the COP, nor may subsidiary bodies alter or otherwise amend decisions or resolutions of the COP without the express prior authorization of the COP.
 - f) In addition to subsidiary bodies, the COP may establish small informal working groups, such as contact groups or friends of the President, to assist it with its work during the COP. Such groups follow the composition and timelines decided by the COP and shall report and make recommendations to the COP.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Rule 26 Sessions

1. Sessions of the COP shall be open for the CPs, observers, members of the Secretariat and invited guests, unless the COP decides otherwise.
2. Sessions of subsidiary bodies shall always be open for the observing CPs. The sessions shall also be open for other kinds of observers, members of the Secretariat and invited guests, unless the subsidiary body concerned decides otherwise.

3. At COPs and extraordinary COPs the CPs shall be seated in accordance with the alphabetical order of the English language names of the CPs, followed by all kinds of observers in the alphabetical order of the English language names of the State or organisation.
4. At Standing Committee meetings delegations shall be seated in a way that SC representatives from a Ramsar region can be able to consult with each other during the session. Then observers from CP's will be seated in accordance with the alphabetical order of the English language names of the CPs. Followed by other observers that will be seated, in accordance with their name in the alphabetical order of the English language of the organisations or States not being CPs.

Rule 27 Quorum

1. At a COP the President may declare a session of the meeting open and permit the debate to proceed if at least one third of the Contracting Parties to the Convention are present and may have decisions taken when representatives of at least two thirds of the Contracting Parties are present and voting.
2. In a subsidiary body at the COP a simple majority of the present members of the subsidiary body shall constitute a quorum. In the event of a body at a COP being open-ended, one quarter of the CPs present at the COP shall constitute a quorum.
3. For work between COPs, subsidiary bodies need a simple majority of the CPs that have been designated to be members to constitute a quorum. If voting, a single majority of the members participating is needed.

Rule 28 Procedures for speaking

1. No one may speak at a session of the COP without having previously obtained the permission of the President. The President shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak, with precedence given to CPs. The Secretariat shall maintain a list of speakers. The President may call a speaker to order if the speaker's remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion.
2. The COP may, on a proposal from the President or from any CP, limit the time allowed to each speaker and the number of times each CP or observer may speak on a question. Before a decision is taken, two representatives may speak in favour of and two against a proposal to set such limits. When the debate is limited and a speaker exceeds the allotted time, the President shall call the speaker to order without delay.
3. A speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order. The speaker may, however, with the permission of the President, give way during the speech to allow any other representative or observer that request clarification on a particular point in that speech.
4. During the course of a debate, the President may announce the list of speakers, and with the consent of the COP, declare the list closed. The President may, however, accord the right of reply to any representative if a speech delivered after the list has been closed makes this desirable.
5. All speakers are to have the ambition to make their speeches short and concise. Long introductions and long courtesies are to be avoided. The speaker should make general

points of view only, going into details only if asked for, or if considered necessary. Suggested amendments for proposals will be referred to in a general description, exact wording of suggested amendments can be presented if the amendments are few.

Rule 29 Precedence

1. The chair or rapporteur of a subsidiary body may be given precedence for the purpose of explaining the conclusions arrived at by that subsidiary body.

Rule 30 Point of order and asking for clarification

1. During the discussion of any matter, a CP may at any time by the means decided for the meeting raise a point of order or ask for a clarification, which shall be decided immediately by the President in accordance with these Rules. A CP may appeal the ruling of the President. The appeal shall be put to the vote immediately and the ruling shall stand unless overruled by a simple majority of the CPs present and voting. A CP's request for order or clarification is to be done by the means decided for the meeting. In these cases, a delegate may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Rule 31 Decisions on competence

1. Any motion calling for a decision on the competence of the COP to discuss any matter or adopt a proposal or an amendment to a proposal submitted to it shall be put to the vote before the matter is discussed or a vote is taken on the proposal or amendment in question.

Rule 32 Proposals and amendments to proposals

1. A proposal that fulfils all formal requirement and is submitted by a CP to the Secretariat, may be changed or amended on advice from the Standing Committee with the consent of the CP that submitted the proposal. If that CP does not so consent or is absent from the meeting, the Standing Committee may request that any proposals for changes or amendments are shown in brackets and if appropriate with explanatory comments.
2. The Standing Committee may also decide that differences of opinion on a proposal may be shown in brackets and if appropriate with explanatory comments.
3. The Secretariat will edit and finalize the proposals, on the basis of the recommendations of the Standing Committee, for distribution in the Convention's official languages to the Contracting Parties at least twelve weeks before the opening of the COP.
4. A new proposal that was not submitted to the Secretariat at least eight weeks before the opening of the Standing Committee meeting at which recommendations are made of documents for consideration by the COP, and amendments to proposals, shall be introduced in writing by the CPs and handed to the Secretariat in at least one of the official languages, for submission to the Conference Bureau.
5. In general, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any session unless the document has been translated into the Convention's official languages of the COP and have been made available to delegations not later than 24 hours preceding the session.

6. Nevertheless, the President may in cases of urgency, permit the discussion and consideration of proposals, amendments to proposals or of procedural motions even though these documents may have been circulated only the same day or have not been translated into all the official languages of the COP, unless the COP otherwise decides.
7. A new proposal from a CP shall deal only with matters that could not have been foreseen in advance of the COP or arise out of the discussions at the COP. The Conference Bureau shall decide if the new proposal meets this requirement, so as to introduce it formally for consideration by the COP.
8. If a new proposal is rejected by the Conference Bureau, the CP submitting the proposal shall be entitled to request the President to submit the question of its admissibility to a vote. The submitting CP shall be given the opportunity to make one intervention to present the arguments in favour of the introduction of the new proposal, and the President shall explain the reasons for its rejection by the Conference Bureau.
9. CPs that have submitted a proposal in time and then developed it further since it was discussed at the Standing Committee, can submit the new version to the Standing Committee before the COP starts for a decision on if the new version is a better one to start the COP negotiation from. Such Rev1-document should have track-changes visible for the changes done since the original version.

Rule 33 Order of procedural motions

1. The following motions shall have precedence, in the order indicated below, over all other proposals or motions:
 - a. To suspend a session;
 - b. To adjourn a session;
 - c. To adjourn the debate on the question under discussion; and
 - d. For the closure of the debate on the question under discussion.
2. Permission to speak on a motion falling within Rule 33 para 1 shall be granted only to the proposer and, in addition, to one speaker in favour of and two against the motion, after which it shall be put immediately to the vote.

Rule 34 Withdrawal of proposals or motions

1. A proposal or motion may be withdrawn by its proposer at any time before voting on it has begun, provided that the motion has not been amended. A proposal or motion withdrawn may be reintroduced by another CP.

Rule 35 Reconsideration of proposals

1. When a proposal has been adopted or rejected, it may not be reconsidered at the same COP, unless the COP, by a two thirds majority of the CPs present and voting, decides in favour of reconsideration. Permission to speak on a motion to reconsider, shall be accorded

only to the mover and one other supporter, after which it shall be put immediately to the vote.

VOTING

Rule 36 Single vote

1. Each CP shall have one vote, except for CPs being observers in a subsidiary body and lacking the right to vote in in the particular subsidiary body.

Rule 37 Consensus and voting

1. The CPs present and voting shall make every effort to reach agreement on all matters of substance by consensus. If all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement reached, the decision shall, as a last resort, be taken by a simple majority vote of the CPs present and voting, unless otherwise provided by the Convention, such as in the case of:
 - a. the adoption of the budget for the next financial period, which shall require a two-third majority of CPs present and voting (Article 6.5 of the Convention); and
 - b. the adoption of the scale of contributions to the budget, which shall require unanimity (Article 6.6 of the Convention).
2. Decisions of the COP on matters of procedure and decisions to add to, delete, defer, or amend items the agenda shall be taken by a simple majority vote of the CPs present and voting.
3. If the question arises whether a matter is one of procedural or substantive nature, the President shall rule on the question. An appeal against this ruling, is to be made digitally as described in the beginning of the meeting and shall be put to the vote immediately. The President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a simple majority of the CPs present and voting.
4. If on matters, other than elections, a vote is equally divided, a second vote shall be taken. If this vote is also equally divided, the proposal shall be regarded as rejected.
5. A representative may not exercise the right to vote unless the individuals name is clearly and unambiguously listed in the credentials.

Rule 38 Order of voting on proposals

1. If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the COP, unless it decides otherwise, shall vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The COP may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal.

Rule 39 Division of proposals and amendments

1. Any representative may request that any parts of a proposal or of an amendment to a proposal be voted on separately. The President shall allow the request unless a CP objects. If objection is made to the request for division, the President shall permit two representatives

to speak, one in favour of and the other against the motion, after which it shall be put immediately to the vote.

2. If the motion referred to in Rule 40 is adopted, those parts of a proposal or of an amendment to a proposal which are approved shall then be put to the vote as a whole. If all the operative parts of a proposal or amendment have been rejected, the proposal or amendment shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.

Rule 40 Amendment to a proposal

1. A motion is considered to be an amendment to a proposal if it merely adds to, deletes from, or revises parts of that proposal. An amendment shall be voted on before the proposal to which it relates is put to the vote, and if the amendment is adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted on.

Rule 41 Order of voting on amendments to a proposal

1. If two or more amendments are moved to a proposal, the COP shall first vote on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal, then on the amendment next furthest removed therefrom, and so on, until all amendments have been put to the vote. The President shall determine the order of voting on the amendments under this Rule.
2. Where, however, the adoption of one amendment necessarily implies the rejection of another amendment, the latter amendment shall not be put to the vote. If one or more amendments are adopted, the amended proposal shall then be voted upon.

Rule 42 Voting procedures

1. Voting shall normally be conducted openly through an electronic system or by show of hands.
 - a) In the case of votes taken through an electronic system, the individual votes of all CPs present and voting, may be displayed on a screen for all participants to see immediately after a vote has taken place, and included in the summary record of the session
 - b) If at any time a CP requests a secret voting, this shall be the method of voting on the issue in question, provided that this request is accepted by a simple majority of the CPs present and voting. The President shall be responsible for the counting of the votes, assisted by tellers appointed by the COP, and shall announce the result.
 - c) An open roll-call vote shall be taken if one is requested by any CP; a call for an open roll-call vote exceeds a call for a secret voting. The votes shall be taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the CP participating in the meeting, beginning with the CP whose name is drawn by lot by the President.
2. In the case of votes taken through an electronic system, the individual votes of all CPs present and voting, may be displayed on a screen for all participants to see immediately after a vote has taken place, and included in the summary record of the session.

3. If at any time a CP requests a secret voting, this shall be the method of voting on the issue in question, provided that this request is accepted by a simple majority of the CPs present and voting. The President shall be responsible for the counting of the votes, assisted by tellers appointed by the COP, and shall announce the result.
4. The vote of each CP participating in a roll-call vote shall be expressed by “Yes”, or “No”, or “Abstain” and shall be recorded in the relevant documents of the COP. When the meeting votes by mechanical means, a non-recorded vote shall replace a vote by show of hands and a recorded vote shall replace a roll-call vote.

Rule 43 Voting conduct

1. After the President has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting. The President may permit the CPs to explain their votes, either before or after the voting, but may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations. The President shall not permit proposers of proposals or of amendments to proposals to explain their vote on their own proposals or amendments, except if they have been amended.

ELECTIONS

Rule 44 Election of one officer

1. If, when one person or one CP is to be elected, no candidate obtains in the first vote a majority, consecutive votes shall be taken until one of the candidates obtains the largest number of votes.
2. In the case of a tie in the first ballot among three or more candidates, a second voting shall be held. If a tie results among more than two candidates, the number shall be reduced to two by lot and the balloting, restricted to them.

Rule 45 Election to two or more officers

1. When two or more officers are to be elected those candidates, not exceeding the number of such places, obtaining in the first voting the largest number of votes and a majority of the votes cast shall be deemed elected.
2. If the number of candidates obtaining such majority is less than the number of persons or delegations to be elected, there shall be additional voting to fill the remaining places, the voting being restricted to the candidates obtaining the greatest number of votes in the previous voting, to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled, provided that, after the third inconclusive voting, votes may be cast for any eligible person or delegation.
3. If three such unrestricted votings are inconclusive, the next three votings shall be restricted to the candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes in the third of the unrestricted votings, to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled, and the following three votings thereafter shall be unrestricted, and so on until all the places have been filled.

SECRETARIAT

Rule 46 Duties of the Secretary General

1. The Secretary General of the Convention shall be the Secretary General of the COP. The Secretary General or a representative of the Secretary General shall act in that capacity in all meetings of the COP and of subsidiary bodies.
2. The Secretary General shall, within available resources, arrange for the provision of staff and services required by the COP and its subsidiary bodies, manage and direct such staff and services, and provide appropriate support and advice to the presiding and other officers of the Convention.
3. The Secretary General shall report on progress made to further the goals on the Convention at each COP, and each year a report on the work done by the Secretariat to the Standing Committee.

Rule 47 Functions of the Secretariat

1. The Secretariat shall, in accordance with these Rules:
 - a) Arrange for interpretation at meetings where so are stipulated;
 - b) Prepare, receive, translate, reproduce and make documents for the meeting available;
 - c) Make and arrange for keeping of sound recordings of meetings where so are stipulated;
 - d) Arrange for the custody and preservation of the documents of meetings where so are stipulated;
 - e) Draft the report of the meetings where so are stipulated and send them for consideration for the participants for the meeting, except for the draft reports for the COP where consideration by the Conference Bureau take place first and the sent for final approval by the COP; and
 - f) Generally, perform all other work that the COP requires and directs.
2. The Secretariat shall provide document in digital format and encourage CPs and observers to download the documents from the Secretariat's Web site on the Internet. Paper copies should only be provided if one or more digital tools aren't working at a meeting.

OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Rule 48 Official and non-official documents

1. All documents related to the meeting, that have been made available by the Secretariat are Official documents.

2. When in doubt, the Secretariat shall request the agreement of the Conference Bureau for issuing a document as an official document of the meeting.
3. CPs and observers wishing to distribute documents which have not been admitted as official documents of the meeting, need the approval of the meeting to do so. If allowed, they shall make their own arrangements for the distribution.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE MEETINGS

Rule 49 Written documentation of the meeting

1. A concise written documentation of a COP is to be presented in a Conference report, which is made available at the Ramsar web site.
2. For the SC meetings, a consolidated meeting report including the decisions is to be written and be made available at the Ramsar website within four weeks. The report is to be based upon the written reports for each half-day session that have been endorsed by the representants of the SC before the closure of the meeting. However, the report of the last day of each meeting shall be sent by email to the participating CPs for endorsement after the meeting.

Rule 50 Sound recording of the COPs

1. Sound recordings of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee, shall be kept by the Secretariat. Recordings may also take place during other kinds of meetings. They are to be accompanied with a description on when different agenda points start.

LANGUAGES AND INTERPRETATION

Rule 51 Official languages and interpretation

1. The official and working languages of the Convention shall be English, French, and Spanish.
2. When at a COP or a SC meeting, statements made in an official language shall be interpreted into the other official languages.
3. A representative of a CP may speak in a language other than an official language, if the CP provides for interpretation into one such official language.
4. Official documents of the COPs shall be drawn up in one of the official languages and translated into the other official languages.
5. Any documents, including proposals, submitted to the Secretariat in any language other than an official language shall be accompanied by a translation into one of the official languages.

ENTERING INTO FORCE AND FUTURE AMENDMENTS

Rule 52 Entering into force and future amendments to the Rules of Procedure

1. If a decision about the Rules of Procedure is taken in the beginning of a COP they are to take effect upon adoption by the COP, and shall remain valid until amended by majority vote of the COP.
2. If a decision about the Rules of Procedure is not taken in the beginning of a COP, but later on at the COP they are to take effect when the COP have been finalised, and shall remain valid until amended by majority vote of the COP.
3. Any CP may propose amendments to these Rules of Procedure by submitting a proposal to the Secretariat before the deadline for suggested draft resolutions in time for the Standing Committee handling the different suggested draft resolution for the next COP. Any such proposal shall be made available like any other official document.

OVERRIDING AUTHORITY OF THE CONVENTION TEXT

Rule 53 Overriding authority of the Conventions text

1. In the event of any conflict between any provision of these rules and any provision of the Convention text, the Convention text shall prevail.