

## Report and Decisions of the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee

Tuesday 21 January 2025

10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

### Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. Opening statements were made by:
  - Dr Xia Jun, Chair of the Standing Committee;
  - Mr James Dalton, Head of Freshwater Programme, IUCN;
  - Mr Tomos Avent, Head of International Programmes, WWT, on behalf of the six International Organization Partners (IOPs); and
  - Dr Musonda Mumba, Secretary General of the Convention

### Agenda item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

2. The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced the provisional agenda in document SC64 Doc.2 Rev.1.
3. One Standing Committee member requested addition of a topic under agenda item 32 “Any other business”, with a view to provide information on its proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure. After clarification by the Legal Advisor that only Standing Committee members can support such a request, two Standing Committee members voiced support to add the suggested item to the meeting’s agenda.
4. Interventions were made by Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Czechia, France and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-01: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional agenda in SC64 Doc.2 Rev.1 as amended.**

### Agenda item 3: Adoption of the provisional working programme

5. The Chair of the Standing Committee introduced the provisional working programme in document SC64 Doc.3 Rev.1.

**Decision SC64-02: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional working programme in document SC64 Doc.3 Rev.1.**

Agenda item 4: Admission of observers

6. The Secretariat outlined the key paragraphs of document SC64 Doc.4 and listed the States not party to the Convention and the bodies or agencies seeking approval to be represented by observers in the meeting.

**Decision SC64-03: The Standing Committee admitted as observers:**

**States not Party to the Convention:**

- Guyana
- Holy See
- Saudi Arabia

**Bodies or agencies seeking approval which have met the criteria included:**

- Arcus reflexus
- Environment and Food Foundation (E2F)

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

7. The Chair of the Standing Committee presented document SC64 Doc.5 and provided information on the meetings of the Executive Team on 11 September 2024 and 19 January 2025.

**Decision SC64-04: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Executive Team and Chair of the Standing Committee published as document SC64 Doc.5.**

Agenda item 6: Report of the Secretary General

8. The Secretary General presented her report contained in document SC64 Doc.6 and provided information on the Secretariat's activities from March to October 2024, highlighting participation in key events related to the implementation of the Convention.
9. Contracting Parties expressed their gratitude for the Secretariat's work, including on addressing regional priorities and preparing for the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15), and noted a significant increase in the Convention's visibility, evidence of improved communications, and enhanced engagement in synergy-building activities. One Party underlined the importance of social media in raising awareness and visibility.
10. Interventions were made by Burkina Faso, China, Czechia, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Madagascar, Sweden and Zimbabwe.

**Decision SC64-05: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Secretary General published as document SC64 Doc.6.**

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

11. The Chair of the Standing Committee, as Chair of the Management Working Group, presented the report on the activities of the Group contained in document SC64 Doc.7.1 and provided an oral overview of the meeting of the Working Group on 20 January 2025. The Chair reported

that due to divergent views on the process to recruit a new Secretary General, on a draft resolution on improving the terms of reference for the Executive Team and the Management Working Group, and on a proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure, consideration of these topics had been passed to the Standing Committee without recommendation by the Management Working Group.

**Decision SC64-06: The Standing Committee took note of the report on the activities of the Management Working Group as found in document SC64 Doc.7.1.**

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

12. The Chair of the Standing Committee, as Chair of the Management Working Group, presented the report on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General contained in document SC64 Doc.7.2.
13. Several Contracting Parties voiced support for a Standing Committee decision on a process for recruiting a new Secretary General rather than a draft resolution, warning about the risk of delays in the recruitment process associated with a resolution and highlighting the increased flexibility provided by a Standing Committee decision. Some Contracting Parties underlined the need to balance considerations of confidentiality with transparency of the recruitment process, voicing support for working with the draft resolution in order to keep all Contracting Parties involved. One Committee member noted that the draft Standing Committee decision requires further work, including on specifying how confidentiality considerations are best taken into account, and called for the establishment of a contact group to work on the decision contained in Annex 2 of the document SC64 Doc.7.2. A number of Contracting Parties supported this proposal.
14. At the suggestion of the Chair of the Standing Committee, a contact group was established to continue discussions on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, focusing on Annex 2 of document SC64 Doc.7.2. Members of the contact group included Argentina, Brazil, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, and Zimbabwe.
15. Interventions were made by Argentina, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Czechia, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, and Zimbabwe.

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group

16. Canada, as the Co-Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group, presented the report of the Working Group, as contained in document SC64 Doc.11. Canada highlighted considerable progress since the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC63), thanking all Working Group members for their hard work, thoughtfulness, thoroughness and spirit of compromise. Canada highlighted key decisions, including that a list of activities had not been included in the draft of the Fifth Strategic Plan (SP5), as these elements of implementation may be considered after the main part of SP5 is finalized, and that the STRP had been invited to provide advice on indicators. Canada stressed that the text of the draft resolution introducing SP5 contains few brackets, while the draft of the Plan itself contains more bracketed text. Canada further drew attention to the preliminary advice from the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) on

indicators, contained in information document SC64 Inf.3, and urged Contracting Parties to advance the work as much as possible to provide the cleanest possible text to COP15.

17. Contracting Parties thanked the Co-Chairs and the Working Group members for their hard work and dedication. They made several proposals, with several Parties suggesting the establishment of a contact group for further discussion. Some Standing Committee members stressed the need to focus on remaining brackets to ensure further progress.
18. A Standing Committee member proposed a new target under Goal 1, to ensure that a given percentage of wetlands are part of a network of protected areas regardless of their status as Wetlands of International Importance.
19. A Contracting Party suggested simplification and a less prescriptive approach, to facilitate the necessary political decisions for implementation.
20. A Standing Committee member, on behalf of a regional group, and a Contracting Party expressed concerns regarding the financial impact linked to implementation of SP5, suggesting the establishment of an intersessional working group with a mandate to mobilize external funding necessary for effective implementation. Another Standing Committee member suggested including activities in SP5 to clarify the actions necessary for its implementation.
21. The Chair of the STRP emphasized that the advice from the STRP on the development of a draft indicator framework is preliminary, since discussion on targets and goals is ongoing and indicators need to reflect these goals and targets. He added that some of the indicators mainly relate to outcomes and are linked to goals or targets, while some process-type indicators relate to specific activities.
22. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Contracting Parties to submit their suggested amendments in writing and invited the Working Group and interested Parties to continue its work during the week, holding its first meeting on Tuesday evening to prepare a revised document. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested focusing on bracketed text while also addressing other key parts of document SC64 Doc.11.
23. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Georgia, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Morocco, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-07: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group.**

Agenda item 29.12: Proposed draft resolution on assessing wetland vulnerability
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24. The Republic of Korea introduced document SC64 Doc.29.12, which presents a draft resolution on assessing wetland vulnerability, stressing its purpose to ensure the wise use of wetlands and recognize, assess and understand their vulnerability to various threats. Noting that similar assessments can be challenging due to lack of data, appropriate methodologies and resources, the Republic of Korea highlighted the Wetland Vulnerability Assessment Tool, stressing that it is easy to use, informative, compatible with existing tools and in a position to assist with better wetland management. The Republic of Korea emphasized that it is a voluntary tool requiring no additional resources from the Convention's core budget, and thanked the Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia and the Philippines for their contributions.

25. Many Contracting Parties thanked the Republic of Korea for its submission and welcomed the draft resolution, stressing its usefulness in assessing wetland-related vulnerabilities and threats, and highlighting its non-mandatory character.
26. A Standing Committee member suggested amendments, including replacing “vulnerability” in the draft resolution’s title with “risks to and pressures on wetlands”, and further suggested deleting references to prioritization in the allocation of resources and focusing on identifying financial needs instead. Some members expressed concerns regarding the global application of the Wetland Vulnerability Assessment Tool, stressing that it had been developed with a specific focus on East Asia and highlighting that various tools exist at the national and regional levels.
27. Some Contracting Parties suggested amendments to ensure additional funding for capacity building for developing countries. A Standing Committee member suggested including reference to Afro-descendent people in addition to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
28. The Chair of the STRP expressed support for the draft resolution, suggesting amendments to describe the consequences of having poor knowledge about wetland vulnerability and an additional paragraph to request the STRP to review the tool and identify elements that may support the proposed review of the Ramsar Information Sheets.
29. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited the Republic of Korea to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.
30. Interventions were made by Brazil, China, Colombia, Czechia, Georgia, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, the Republic of Korea and the Chair of the STRP.

**15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

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

31. Iran (Islamic Republic of) provided an update on the contact group discussions relating to the report on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, highlighting that both Annex 1 and Annex 2 of document SC64 Doc.7.2 had been discussed and requested additional time to resolve differences between Parties’ views.
32. One Standing Committee member requested assistance from the Legal Advisor considering different interpretations of the repercussions of Annexes 1 and 2. Another member queried why the contact group had included Annex 1 in its discussions, reminding the Committee that the mandate given to the group was to base discussions on Annex 2.
33. Upon invitation by one Standing Committee member, several Contracting Parties voiced their interest in joining the group’s deliberations. One Standing Committee member called for maintaining regional balance within the group. Others highlighted the value of increased participation in the group’s discussions.

34. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted the new participants in the contact group, namely Colombia, France, Mexico and Panama, and expressed hope that the group would achieve consensus as soon as possible with support from the Legal Advisor.
35. Interventions were made by Brazil, Colombia, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mexico, Panama, Switzerland and Zimbabwe.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening
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36. The Co-Chair of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening (ISWG), the United States of America, presented the report of the Working Group as contained in SC64 Doc.12. The United States of America thanked the Co-Chair from South Africa and all participants of the ISWG for their hard work and robust, in-depth and comprehensive input. The United States of America provided an overview of the working phases of the group, highlighted the stepwise approach grounded in a common understanding of facts, and outlined the report's content, comprising the identified institutional challenges, determined root causes, and potential solutions for strengthened institutional arrangements. The United States of America highlighted Annex 4, which contains a draft resolution on implementing the institutional strengthening of the Convention.
37. Several Contracting Parties thanked the Co-Chairs for their leadership and voiced appreciation for the ISWG's outcome. One Standing Committee member urged addressing administrative arrangements to tackle challenges relating to international recognition and visibility of the Convention.
38. One Standing Committee member suggested adding a paragraph to the draft resolution, proposing that a working group be established to address resource mobilization, and arguing that the Subgroup on Finance would not be the suitable forum to address the lack of clear formalized financial mechanisms for implementation of the Convention. Several Contracting Parties supported establishment of a working group on resource mobilization, that would investigate the possibilities for establishing a dedicated fund. Some Standing Committee members cautioned against amending the output of the ISWG.
39. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested establishing a small group of interested Contracting Parties, chaired by the United States of America, to incorporate the views expressed and to report back to the Standing Committee with clean text. The United States of America, as Co-Chair of the ISWG, voiced concern over this procedure given the overall approach of the ISWG and suggested inserting the proposed amendments in brackets to signal the lack of consensus. Several Contracting Parties underlined the importance of considering the proposed amendments to the draft resolution, highlighting the Standing Committee's role in reviewing working group outputs, and urged that consensus be sought on the matter during the present meeting. Several other Parties called for the outcome of the ISWG to be respected, rejecting amendments to the draft resolution and questioning the procedural integrity of amending the draft resolution presented by the ISWG.
40. The Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee and some Contracting Parties highlighted the importance of mobilizing financial means to implement the Strategic Plan and make progress towards its ambitious goals and targets.

41. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Colombia to approach interested Parties to discuss the proposed amendments in an informal setting with the perspective of reporting back to the plenary session of Thursday morning.
42. Interventions were made by Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mexico, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden, the United States of America as Chair of the ISWG, and Zimbabwe.

Agenda item 26: Report of the Working Group on RIS Updating
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43. Australia, as the Co-Chair of the Working Group on Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) Updating, presented the report of the Working Group, as contained in document SC64 Doc.26, noting that the Group was established at SC63 and had had limited time to complete its work. Australia underscored that the report summarizes the challenges identified by Contracting Parties under four thematic categories: the RIS review process; the RIS updating cycle; the RIS format; and capacity. Australia emphasized that the draft resolution reflects the feedback provided by Contracting Parties, including the need to: streamline the review process; clearly communicate relevant deadlines; and address concerns regarding the frequency of updates, noting divergent views on the update cycle. Other suggestions included: updating priority fields rather than the entire form; using automated data inputs if possible; and considering opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among Contracting Parties. Australia noted that the draft resolution proposes that COP15 establish a new working group that can work on improvements to the RIS format that address concerns and challenges identified by Contracting Parties.
44. A Standing Committee member and a Contracting Party suggested that the working group proposed within the draft resolution retain this large amount of information for its future work, taking into account “all of the information included in Annex 2” of document SC64 Doc.26, rather than “the proposals and challenges identified by Contracting Parties”.
45. A Standing Committee member, supported by another, offered several amendments, including: distinguishing between well-managed Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”) that may require less frequent updates, and cases of changes in ecological status or impacts of natural disasters that may necessitate urgent updates; developing different search possibilities for the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS); retaining in the draft resolution both options of a Standing Committee decision or a COP resolution and including specific guidance on the direction of possible suggestions; not creating apps that will not resolve present challenges; deleting a provision noting that Ramsar Regional Initiatives should help with the updating, noting the national Administrative Authorities should take such actions and decisions; deleting a suggestion to establish an RIS fund for technical and administrative support; and providing the possibility to split up current data fields and suggest new ones.
46. Some Contracting Parties expressed general support for the draft resolution. One called for capacity building and resources for the least developed countries to assist in conducting assessments leading to RIS updates. Another emphasized the need to bear in mind the financial impact, especially for developing countries.
47. Contracting Parties debated whether to include all new suggestions in brackets and forward the document to COP15. Some Parties stressed that no brackets should be used if there is no

opposition, suggesting the development of a revised document and then deciding on the brackets. Others emphasized the need to see the proposals in writing and study them further.

48. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited interested Parties to send their comments in written form to develop a revised document, noting that the agenda item would be readdressed on Thursday afternoon.
49. Interventions were made by Algeria, Argentina, Australia as the Co-Chair of the Working Group, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Canada, France, Georgia, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Morocco, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Sweden.

Agenda item 29.6: Proposed draft resolution on improving the terms of reference for the Executive Team and the Management Working Group
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50. Sweden introduced document SC64 Doc.29.6, which presents a draft resolution on improving the terms of reference for the Executive Team and the Management Working Group. Sweden provided information on recent work on the Convention's bodies under the Effectiveness Working Group to address issues related to legitimacy, accountability, effectiveness and costs related to the Convention's bodies, stressing that the draft resolution focuses on clarity, legitimacy and effectiveness. Sweden outlined problems it saw related to the Management Working Group and the Executive Team, including representation issues and difficulties in obtaining a quorum for decision making. Sweden further presented the main elements of the draft resolution, including: specific tasks and a suggested composition of eight to ten formal members of the Management Working Group with other interested Contracting Parties participating as observers; and provisions for the Executive Team, including allocating an additional region to be represented by each member of the Executive Team so that all regions are represented.
51. Some Contracting Parties supported the draft resolution, stressing the need to further improve the working modalities and provide clear mandates for the two bodies.
52. Other Contracting Parties preferred proceeding cautiously given that the proposal presented fundamental, structural amendments to the Management Working Group and expressed concerns regarding: the criteria to be used to determine a region's representation; whether the Management Working Group had been consulted on the suggested changes; avoiding undermining the effectiveness of the Executive Team by introducing elements of regional representation; potential financial implications; and loss of continuity if previous chairs are not included in the work of the Management Working Group. Many suggested further work to develop collective understanding on these issues among the Contracting Parties during the next triennium.
53. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested that Sweden informally discuss a possible way forward with those Parties with divergent views and report back to plenary with a suggested way forward by Thursday afternoon.
54. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Gabon, Georgia, Hungary, Japan, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Sweden.



**Wednesday 22 January**

**10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

Agenda item 18: Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

55. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) presented elements of document SC64 Doc.18, highlighting: high-priority tasks completed; STRP outputs to date and upcoming, including the Global Wetlands Outlook 2025, which is scheduled to be launched just before COP15; the consultation with the Earth observation community, with details contained in information document SC64 Inf.2; and draft resolutions prepared for consideration by the Standing Committee. The Chair of the STRP further introduced annexes to the report, containing information on: STRP priorities for the period 2026-2028; guidance on using alternative population estimates under Criterion 6; the scoping note for the review of legal and policy frameworks for wetland conservation and wise use; the proposed approach to deliver future Global Wetland Outlooks; and financing for the establishment of the Waterbirds Estimates Partnership and delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates.
56. Standing Committee members expressed gratitude for the STRP's work and guidance, and shared inputs on the new STRP Communiqué, on the frequency of the Global Wetland Outlook and associated budgetary implications, and on the importing of data to the Ramsar Sites Information Service. Two members expressed interest in the STRP work plan, including activities related to the role of wetlands in influencing local climates and hydrological cycles. A member asked that the STRP Communiqué be sent to National Focal Points.
57. The Chair of the STRP noted that resourcing of future editions of the Global Wetland Outlook will determine the character of the product, with a more comprehensive report, as currently proposed every nine years, requiring greater funding; and assured the Committee that the STRP Communiqué will be shared with National Focal Points.
58. Interventions were made by Australia, Czechia, Japan, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-08: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel.**

Agenda item 19: Draft resolution on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2026-2028

59. The Chair of the STRP presented elements of the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.19, highlighting core work areas for the next triennium and future priorities, and noting that the Secretariat would henceforth issue the call for nominations of STRP members following the full meeting of the Standing Committee preceding the meeting of the COP.
60. Contracting Parties thanked the STRP for identifying future priorities for its work. They suggested: that the assessment of wetland ecosystem health should be visualized, capturing change over time; the addition of organizations to the list of bodies invited to participate as observers in the meetings and processes of the STRP for the 2026-2028 triennium; the addition of livelihoods of wetland communities as a priority task under the proposed Thematic Work Area 4, to address an unbalanced focus on conservation; the expansion of the tasks related to Wetlands of International Importance, to examine the impacts of climate change on ecological character and to consider how national classification schemes may be affected by

the proposed review of the classification of wetland types, noting that the gap analysis of Wetlands of International Importance would have lower priority and could be done after wetland types have been reclassified; a focus on the role of wetlands in influencing local climate systems and the hydrological cycle; and an additional task related to fundraising and mobilization.

61. The Chair of the STRP provided clarification on the two-step approach for the review of the wetland types classification. In response to a Party's concern that the planned review of legal and policy frameworks might be too prescriptive, he highlighted that the review is intended to create a useful resource by compiling positive examples of national frameworks.
62. Interventions were made by Australia, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Costa Rica, Czechia, Georgia, Madagascar, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Republic of Korea, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-09: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.19 on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2026-2028 to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 20: Draft resolution on the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027)
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63. The Chair of the STRP introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.20, for which he acknowledged the support of Wetlands International. The Chair highlighted that the draft resolution strives to ensure that waterbird population estimates (WPE) are up to date, noting that lack of information on the status of waterbirds limits Contracting Parties' ability to designate new Wetlands of International Importance and conserve wetlands effectively.
64. Many Standing Committee members expressed support for the draft resolution and appreciation for the overall approach. A member suggested considering a more flexible approach, including subsets of species and better coordination with processes such as the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Another proposed considering a long-term partnership beyond 2027, highlighting the need to address financial challenges through an appropriate mechanism.
65. A Standing Committee member suggested that the envisaged global coordination committee provide regular updates to Contracting Parties on its activities and report to subsequent Standing Committee meetings on progress in the implementation of its detailed work programme. The same member further suggested clarifying the criteria for the preliminary selection of the entities for the committee and reviewing the criteria for prioritizing the regions to be evaluated.
66. Members further suggested: ensuring that the related costs are appropriate and that long-term financial sustainability is achieved, including through consideration by the Subgroup on Finance; strengthening regional efforts to alleviate pressures on the Convention's budget; clarifying the relationship between regional and global population estimates; amending the mandate of the proposed Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) to also analyse assessments on populations trends and provide relevant advice; ensuring flyway bodies and initiatives are on board; strengthening transfer of local information to the WEP; and ensuring appropriate capacity building to strengthen national efforts and address data gaps.

67. Wetlands International, supported by several Member States of the European Union, expressed readiness to support the initiative with time and resources, including by acting as the WEP Secretariat, and stressed that population estimates are under-resourced and require modest but reliable financial backing to deliver the required services. Birdlife International emphasized that its 123 national partners are ready to support the WEP.
68. The Chair of the STRP highlighted the constructive feedback, noting that increased participation in the global coordinating committee can be a mechanism for increased engagement and welcoming suggestions on the role of the Standing Committee in supporting the process.
69. Interventions were made by Australia, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe, Birdlife International, Wetlands International and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-10: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.20 to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 21: Draft resolution on the application of Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance

70. The Chair of the STRP introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.21, highlighting that it is a technical draft resolution, suggesting amendments to the *Strategic framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*. On Criterion 6 (that a wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird), amendments focus on clarifying the use of waterbird population estimates, updating taxonomic standards and ensuring consistency between Criteria 5 and 6. On Criterion 9 (that a wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species), amendments focus on improving the clarity of definitions, expanding guidance for the assessment of wetland-dependent non-avian species, and ensuring the availability of reliable population estimates.
71. Standing Committee members expressed general support for the draft resolution, with a regional group suggesting appropriate funding sources be made available to enable Contracting Parties' work. A member proposed that regarding the proposal on Criterion 9, a cost estimate will be required as there may be millions of non-avian wetland-dependent species. Other members expressed concerns over alternative population estimates with one suggesting that guidance be developed on how to decide which data source is more reliable. A member proposed simplifying the text and ensuring that the two guidelines can be read and understood separately, which would simplify any future update of only one of them.
72. The Chair of the STRP agreed on the need for a cost estimate on Criterion 9; explained that the STRP has no mandate on funding issues; and noted that the Report of the Chair of the STRP (document SC64 Doc.18) includes an annex containing guidance on alternative estimates, stressing the need for harmonization.

73. Interventions were made by Australia, Canada, Madagascar on behalf of the Africa region, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-11: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.21 on the application of Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.2: Proposed draft resolution on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services [and the Freshwater Challenge]

74. Gabon introduced the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.2, highlighting the Freshwater Challenge initiative launched in 2023 by Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Gabon, Mexico and Zambia. Its membership includes 49 countries and the European Union which aim to support and accelerate the restoration of 300,000 kilometres of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030. Gabon explained that the draft resolution aims to encourage Contracting Parties to adopt quantifiable restoration objectives and integrate freshwater conservation in national policies. Gabon highlighted the importance of the draft resolution for effective wetland management, strengthening the links between the Convention, the Freshwater Challenge and other Conventions, and actively engaging Contracting Parties, the STRP and the Secretariat.
75. Many Standing Committee members expressed general support for the draft resolution and suggested amendments, including regarding: clarifying a provision encouraging Contracting Parties to adopt common restoration indicators for freshwater ecosystems, highlighting the draft strategic plan's goal and target on wetland restoration and the relevant indicators corresponding to Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; aligning the draft resolution more closely with the mandate of the Freshwater Challenge that does not include commitments to quantifiable targets; removing over-prescriptive elements; and defining nature-based solutions and freshwater ecosystems.
76. Some Standing Committee members expressed concerns over: defining water as a global common good since it is a natural resource under states' sovereignty; a reference to the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, noting that it is convened by one country; and the lack of a specific link between the Freshwater Challenge and the Administrative Authorities of the Contracting Parties, providing relevant suggestions. Others suggested better clarifying the voluntary nature of the Freshwater Challenge and referring in the draft resolution's title to freshwater ecosystem restoration and not to the Freshwater Challenge.
77. The Chair of the STRP expressed overall support for the draft resolution, suggesting retaining its focus rather than integrating it into past decisions, and further stressing the need for consistency, where possible, regarding indicators applied in the Strategic Plan and the monitoring frameworks of other multilateral environmental agreements. IUCN suggested adding an annex to streamline the text and provide relevant definitions.
78. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Gabon to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.

79. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Georgia, Libya on behalf of the Africa region, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, IUCN and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 13: Roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee

80. The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.13, highlighting its four annexes.
81. Two Standing Committee members suggested amendments. One proposed deletion of brackets around text relating to the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards and the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, which was supported by several Contracting Parties. Two Standing Committee members opposed deletion of the brackets, noting that both issues relate to unresolved agenda items, and suggested maintaining the brackets until those issues are resolved later in the meeting.
82. Interventions were made by Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Canada, Czechia, Madagascar, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-12: The Standing Committee:**

- i. **instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.13 on responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention on Wetlands to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee; and**
- ii. **confirmed that paragraph 6 of Annex 1 and paragraph 5 of Annex 3 to the draft resolution replace outstanding Decisions reported in document SC64 Doc.8, which can be considered “implemented” and removed from the list of “outstanding” decisions in accordance with Decision SC63-18.**

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

83. The Secretariat summarized the report, contained in document SC64 Doc.8, introducing a list of outstanding Decisions of the Standing Committee and actions such as incorporating decisions or elements thereof in draft resolutions, as proposed by the Secretariat.
84. One Standing Committee member proposed several amendments, suggesting repealing additional Decisions. Another Member called for additional time to review the suggested changes and proposed actions for each Decision.
85. Interventions were made by Canada and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-13: The Standing Committee took note of the report and instructed the Secretariat to invite members of the Standing Committee to provide suggestions for actions to close outstanding Decisions and to include these suggestions in the Secretariat’s report on outstanding decisions to be presented to the Committee’s 67th meeting (SC67).**

Agenda item 29.10: Proposed draft resolution on recognition of river dolphins as key species for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in South America and Asia

86. Colombia presented elements of the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.10, highlighting regional efforts in South America and Asia, in particular in the Amazon, Orinoco, and Ganges River basins. Colombia noted the Global Declaration for River Dolphins, which aims to reduce or halt the process of population reduction and create a network of habitats, and highlighted the importance of the involvement and sense of ownership of local communities. Colombia concluded by emphasizing the use of river dolphin populations as an indicator of ecosystem health, promoting relevant research and working towards consolidating regional efforts.
87. Many Contracting Parties supported the proposal, suggesting among other things: including additional species and habitats such as the Mekong River basin; rephrasing a provision on promoting sustainable use and the application of good fishing practices and other economic activities to exclude potentially harmful activities; including provisions on fishing bans, noting their relevance for conservation; and using good practices and knowledge on river dolphin management for other species and countries.
88. Some Parties expressed reservations on developing draft resolutions on specific taxa, suggesting broadening the scope of the draft resolution. Colombia reiterated that through river dolphins, important information on the health of ecosystems may be obtained and that organizing national efforts into regional ones can lead to ecosystem conservation.
89. The Chair of the STRP expressed support for the draft resolution, suggesting adding a reporting element in activities and annexing the Global Declaration for River Dolphins to the amended draft resolution.
90. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Colombia to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.
91. Interventions were made by Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, China, Colombia, Czechia, France, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Mexico, Panama, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (continued)

92. Canada, as the Co-Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group, reported on the Group's deliberations on the Strategic Plan, noting that the Group had initially addressed an information document relating to indicators prepared by the Chair of the STRP and had decided to collect inputs from Contracting Parties during the intersessional period with a view to updating the information document, and had then attempted to clear brackets from the draft Strategic Plan. Canada highlighted that after some brackets had been cleared, disagreement over the purpose of the meeting, specifically whether the Group should address only brackets or also consider additional suggestions by Parties, had halted further progress.

93. Argentina noted that, following the Chair's advice, it had submitted comments on the Strategic Plan in written form, which had not been circulated among the participants of the Working Group, and had not been discussed during the Working Group meeting. Requesting that its statement be recorded in the meeting's report, Argentina reaffirmed its commitment to the goals of the Convention and underscored the essential role of multilateralism as an instrument for international collaboration. Reassuring Contracting Parties regarding their willingness to engage in negotiations on the Strategic Plan, Argentina said the Strategic Plan should constitute a framework that enables all Parties to opt for the best available policies according to national legislation, their circumstances, priorities, capacities and availability of means of implementation. Argentina noted that many of the provisions included in the current draft impose particular visions or paradigms, which only marginally address the challenges of the Convention. The Party provided examples, saying that the 2030 Agenda is composed of legally non-binding aspirations which each State, in the exercise of its sovereignty, has the right to interpret and pursue freely. Argentina noted that in this vein, the Strategic Plan must have the purpose of pursuing the binding objectives of the Convention and not extraneous objectives, adding this would not mean that each Contracting Party, in its national implementation process, cannot apply the understanding it deems convenient. The Party further reaffirmed its commitment to women's rights, noting that these rights have been embodied in its national legislation and in domestic practices going beyond international standards, and warned that applying a sectorized perspective to understanding human rights generates inequalities, which contradicts the intended objective of non-discrimination. Argentina expressed concern over the prescriptive nature of the language used in the Strategic Plan and the choice of a single theoretical framework. One Standing Committee member voiced support regarding concern over the process taken in the Working Group.
94. The Chair of the Standing Committee established a Friends of the Chair group, mandated to agree on the process forward to resolve the remaining brackets in the draft Strategic Plan, but also considering concerns that some Parties regard as top priorities. The Chair urged delegates to work in a spirit of compromise and noted Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mexico, Poland, Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe and the Chair of the STRP as members of the Friends of the Chair group.
95. Interventions were made by Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mexico, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe and the Chair of the STRP.

<p>Agenda item 29.11: Proposed draft resolution on education and participation as a basis for the management of urban and peri-urban wetlands</p>
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96. Colombia introduced the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.11, noting that several existing Resolutions provide a basis for it, and highlighting the need to further develop tools and processes which will lead to more effective protection in light of increasing pressures on and losses of urban and peri-urban wetlands.
97. Several Contracting Parties voiced support for the draft resolution, highlighting challenges with the management of urban wetlands and underlining the potential of the draft resolution to influence national policy making. One Standing Committee member, supported by two others, suggested several paragraphs for addition, including on encouraging Parties to adopt

national or subnational approaches for education on wetlands and to support capacity building of educators. Other Parties noted that additional amendments had been shared in written form with the Secretariat, including the addition of a reference to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

98. One Standing Committee member, supported by another, questioned the added value of the draft resolution, given that its content is already covered by existing Resolutions, and suggested that the main addition, the establishment of a fund, would be beyond the Convention's mandate and thus impossible to realize. Deletion of the paragraph on establishment of a fund was supported by a third Standing Committee member.
99. Colombia highlighted that the draft resolution aims to improve the effectiveness of the mandates given through existing Resolutions by developing existing instruments for the particular context of education for urban wetlands, and expressed flexibility on deleting the paragraph on creating a fund.
100. One Standing Committee member suggested that novel ideas contained in the draft resolution could be inserted into existing Resolutions to avoid creating overlaps and discrepancies.
101. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Colombia to prepare a revised draft resolution, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants, to be discussed on Thursday.
102. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Republic of Korea and Sweden.

Agenda item 29.3: Proposed draft resolution on strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway
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103. China presented elements of the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.3, which provides an overview of regional efforts to conserve and protect the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) and calls for enhanced action by Contracting Parties and other governments in the EAAF. China stressed that the EAAF is one of most endangered global flyways, and reminded Contracting Parties that to address challenges a Ramsar Regional Initiative, the EAAF Partnership (EAAFP) was established in 2006. China summarized suggestions put forth by Australia, Japan, the Chair of the STRP, the Chief Executive of the EAAFP and the Global Director of Birdlife International following informal discussions, including: scaling up connectivity to global environmental agendas, in particular involving other flyways and the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals; extending the scope to all flyways, ensuring complementarity of efforts; and rephrasing instructions to Contracting Parties, the STRP, the Secretariat and other organizations in the operational part of the draft resolution.
104. Contracting Parties suggested a broader scope covering all flyways, stressing that cooperation between flyways should be emphasized. A group of countries noted that if assessment of Resolution X.22 on *Promoting international cooperation for the conservation of waterbird flyways* reveals that a revised resolution is required, a working group representing all flyways should be established to develop it. A Standing Committee member suggested deleting a request to the Secretariat to review the implementation of Resolution X.22. A Contracting



Party suggested considering provisions for capacity building, technology transfer and financial support to least developed countries.

105. The EAAFP highlighted its role as an effective mechanism for enhancing ecological connectivity, contributing to the effective implementation of national conservation and restoration actions, and aiming to reinforce the role of key wetlands through communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) and monitoring on a flyway-wide scale.
106. The Chair of the STRP welcomed the draft resolution and made suggestions to strengthen it, including noting that the loss of habitats for migratory waterbirds is continuing in some regions of the EAAF and that other pressures are affecting populations.
107. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited China to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.
108. Interventions were made by Australia, China, Hungary on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Japan, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, the EAAFP and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 29.4: Proposed draft resolution on promoting incorporation of frontier technology and traditional ecological knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management, and wise use

109. China presented the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.4, which is co-sponsored by Burkina Faso, Gabon, Madagascar and Panama. China stressed the importance of new technological tools and of traditional knowledge for wetland conservation, restoration, management and wise use, and also for addressing global environmental challenges across multilateral environmental agreements. China highlighted suggested amendments following informal discussions with Australia, Japan, Panama and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including: addressing terminology around “frontier technology” and “traditional ecological knowledge”, with China proposing to refer to “new technology” and “traditional knowledge” or to “traditional, Indigenous and more recently derived technology and methods” as in Resolution VII.19; including the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) regarding access to and dissemination of traditional knowledge; referring to voluntary and mutually agreed terms regarding the promotion of the incorporation and integration of new technology and traditional knowledge in wetlands, based on national feasibility; ensuring ethical protocols are followed; and including references to public access to scientific and technical information on platforms created by Contracting Parties as well as to systematic assessment of the ecological integrity of wetlands.
110. Some Contracting Parties expressed support for the draft resolution. Some suggested producing a revised version, noting that many amendments had been proposed. Two Standing Committee members suggested reflecting the FPIC principle and reference to voluntary and mutually agreed terms for sharing technology in additional parts of the draft resolution. A member noted that providing free access to other open databases falls outside the scope of the Convention, while others noted that such access is limited by, among other things, property and intellectual property rights, and sought clarity on the added value of the draft resolution given existing international agreements.

111. A Standing Committee member proposed deleting specific examples of new technologies, such as satellites, artificial intelligence, open access databases, clouds and data process engines, noting that no multilaterally agreed definitions exist. A Contracting Party noted that least developed countries have no capacity to integrate new technologies, lacking the necessary infrastructure and expertise, and suggested focusing on capacity-building needs.
112. The Chair of the STRP suggested referring to “new or emerging technologies”, adding that the request to the STRP, to review the advance in new technologies and their application, the status of preservation of traditional wetland knowledge and best practices for incorporation of new technologies and traditional knowledge into wetland conservation, restoration, management and wise use, and to develop relevant guidelines, is too broad, suggesting refinement.
113. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited China to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.
114. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Japan, Madagascar, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Panama, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 29.5: Proposed draft resolution on achieving the equitable and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

115. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland introduced the draft resolution, developed in collaboration with Zimbabwe, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.5. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland noted the aim of the draft resolution to integrate Wetlands of International Importance into national and international conservation frameworks and to create synergies, highlighting that the draft resolution could help to better harness available funding streams.
116. Several Contracting Parties voiced support for the draft resolution, highlighting the relevance of creating synergies with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the potential added value for implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Several Parties provided suggestions for amendments, including adding reference to the definition and criteria for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
117. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to prepare a revised draft resolution, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants, to be discussed on Thursday.
118. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 16: Report of the Youth Working Group

119. Australia, as Chair of the Youth Working Group, introduced the report of the Youth Working Group, as contained in document SC64 Doc.16, highlighting: progress on the Group's work tasks; youth indicators considered for the draft Strategic Plan; and the nomination of a total of 39 Youth Focal Points until today, encouraging Parties to make financial contributions, including to enable COP attendance of youth delegates.
120. One Standing Committee member thanked the Group for its work, welcomed the appointment of Youth Focal Points, suggested that a list of youth delegates nominated by Contracting Parties be made available, and called for strengthening of youth engagement in the Convention and extending the mandate for the Youth Working Group beyond COP15.
121. Interventions were made by Australia and Belgium on behalf of the Europe region.

**Decision SC64-14: The Standing Committee took note of the progress of the Youth Working Group as presented in SC64 Doc.16.**

Agenda item 29.8: Proposed draft resolution on youth empowerment and integration: driving engagement in and the longevity of the Convention on Wetlands

122. Australia presented the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.8, which aims to continue youth engagement, and proposes the re-establishment the Youth Working Group for the 2025-2028 triennium, with an updated composition and mandate. Australia outlined key actions, including: requesting the Secretariat to continue to employ the capacity of its junior professional programme; informing the Youth Working Group of available funding opportunities and establishing connections with potential donor partners; urging Contracting Parties to empower their Youth Focal Point to participate in national and international decision-making processes; calling upon all Convention working groups and subsidiary bodies to include at least one youth representative member; and encouraging the STRP to engage with young and early-career scientists and researchers. Australia clarified that the suggested potential establishment of a dedicated youth body will be informed in consultation with the Youth Working Group and the broader youth network and will be presented at COP15.
123. Many Standing Committee members supported the draft resolution. Some suggested amendments to anchor youth participation in conservation activities permanently, empowering youth to engage in the work of the Convention in a meaningful manner. Two Contracting Parties pointed to the need for capacity building and allocation of funds to ensure youth can be involved in the Convention's work, in particular in least developed countries.
124. A member noted that empowering Youth Focal Points to participate in decision-making processes should take into account national and practical circumstances, and suggested further elaborating the terms of reference for the Youth Working Group. Another member underscored that appointing youth as national or regional representatives in the Convention's working groups and subsidiary bodies, as well as including them in delegations, may run contrary to national legislation in various countries, further noting that youth representatives should attend STRP meetings as observers. Yet another stressed that the Secretariat and Contracting Parties should be "invited" to explore funding opportunities for the Youth Working Group as appropriate and to empower their Youth Focal Point for participation in decision-making processes, rather than "instructed" and "urged", respectively.

125. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Australia to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.
126. Interventions were made by Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, China, Japan, Madagascar, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, and Sweden.

Agenda item 29.1: Proposed draft resolution on strengthening action on culture and wetlands
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127. Kenya, on behalf of Uganda, introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.1. Kenya emphasized that embedding cultural values and traditions is an effective driver in achieving good ecological conditions in wetlands. Kenya highlighted work under the CBD on biological and cultural diversity as well as opportunities for further cooperation on issues of culture regarding wetlands with other bodies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
128. Standing Committee members recognized the importance of integrating cultural values in the work of the Convention and some supported the draft resolution while others requested amendments and clarifications. Regarding inviting the Secretariat to investigate options for developing a targeted programme of culture-related work in support of relevant objectives defined in the Convention's fifth Strategic Plan, some members noted that the proposal is too broad, suggesting that its purpose and expected outcomes be clarified. A member noted that this work should be performed by the Ramsar Culture Network rather than the Secretariat. On the suggested participation of Indigenous Peoples, a member emphasized that participation must be in accordance with national legislation of each Party.
129. A Standing Committee member underscored that the World Heritage Convention offers further opportunity for cooperation and suggested inviting all relevant international bodies and initiatives referenced in the draft resolution to join the Ramsar Culture Network if it is established. Another stressed that establishing such a formal body will have budgetary implications. A Contracting Party highlighted the establishment of a subsidiary body under the CBD on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the CBD related to Indigenous Peoples, suggesting ensuring further synergies. Delegates further discussed terminology issues around Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with Indonesia reserving the right to revert on this issue during future discussions and requesting its reservation be reflected in the meeting's report.
130. The Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet) noted that the Ramsar Culture Network already exists, despite not having been formally established or recognized, and can contribute to the implementation of the draft resolution, further highlighting a recent publication on cultural services provided by wetlands produced by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT).
131. The Secretariat sought clarity on whether the envisaged Ramsar Culture Network will be voluntary and sought further guidance on its nature, structure and governance to facilitate its revival as well as further specificity on what a targeted work programme of culture-related work would entail.
132. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Kenya, on behalf of Uganda, to prepare a revised draft resolution for discussion later in the week, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants.

133. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Canada, Czechia, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya on behalf of Uganda, Madagascar on behalf of Zambia, Mexico and the MedWet Initiative.

#### Thursday 23 January

#### 10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee

##### Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (continued)

134. The Chair of the Standing Committee reported on deliberations in the Friends of the Chair group on the Strategic Plan, thanking Canada and Argentina for their work resulting in a revised document that had been circulated among the Group's members, and announcing that Colombia had agreed to act as Co-Chair of the Strategic Plan Working Group, alongside Canada.

##### Agenda item 29.7: Proposed draft resolution on rights of nature in wetlands

135. Sri Lanka presented the draft resolution contained in SC64 Doc.29.7, highlighting the urgent need for a paradigm shift in human-nature interactions, outlining the transformative potential of recognizing nature's intrinsic values, and noting the draft resolution does not prescribe legal recognition of nature's rights.
136. Some Standing Committee members, including a regional group, acknowledging the international recognition of diverse value systems, noted that application of the concept should be a voluntary choice and suggested the draft resolution be submitted to COP15 in brackets, pointing at its premature status. Another member called for caveats to be inserted, to avoid unintended consequences of the draft resolution related to lack of clarity in definitions of the concept.
137. One Contracting Party voiced support for the draft resolution, noting it contributes to the conservation of wetlands and wildlife.
138. Several Contracting Parties opposed forwarding the draft resolution to COP15, noting that consideration of rights of nature in wetlands is beyond the Convention's scope and expressing concern over the draft's incompatibility with international law, including potential conflicts with Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration on States' sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and with the rights of local populations depending on wetland ecosystems for their livelihoods.
139. Following the Chair's suggestion to forward the draft resolution to COP15 in square brackets, Contracting Parties sought clarification on the procedure for submitting draft resolutions for consideration by the COP, which the Legal Advisor provided and one Standing Committee member added to, specifying that while the Standing Committee cannot oppose the forwarding of a draft resolution proposed by a Contracting Party for consideration by the COP, the proponent of the draft resolution can be asked to withdraw their proposal or the draft resolution can be forwarded in brackets to signal lack of consensus.
140. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Sri Lanka to consider withdrawing the draft resolution and said a decision by the Standing Committee would be made on Friday morning.

141. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Georgia, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Zimbabwe.

Agenda item 29.9: Proposed draft resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles for the wise use of wetlands

142. India introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.9, highlighting the importance of sustainable lifestyles and outlining the rationale for the proposed resolution, including to follow up on Resolution 6/8 of the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) on promoting sustainable lifestyles.
143. Several Contracting Parties welcomed the draft resolution and provided amendments, with many Parties seeking definition of sustainable lifestyles, given the vagueness of the concept. One Standing Committee member suggested endorsing UNEA Resolution 6/8 instead of crafting a resolution for the Convention, noting that some proposed elements would go beyond the Convention's mandate. One Contracting Party cautioned against overburdening the STRP with a request to submit a compilation of the methods, case studies and evidence base to support the integration of sustainable lifestyles in wetlands management, which the Chair of the STRP noted would require refinement. Another voiced concern over implementation of the resolution and potential effects on trade.
144. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited India to prepare a revised draft resolution, reflecting the comments and suggestions submitted by participants, to be discussed on Friday.
145. Interventions were made by Argentina, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, India, Japan, Zimbabwe on behalf of the Contracting Parties of the Africa region, and the Chair of the STRP.

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

146. Colombia reported on informal consultations on the draft resolution, in particular regarding a suggestion to set up a working group on resource mobilization, including the potential establishment of a dedicated trust fund. Colombia noted that consensus could not be reached and suggested forwarding the draft resolution to COP15 including the aforementioned suggestion in square brackets.

**Decision SC64-15: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the Working Group on Institutional Strengthening and instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64.12 on Institutional Strengthening to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 15.1: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Report of the Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel

147. Gabon, Chair of the CEPA Oversight Panel, presented the report contained in document SC64 Doc.15.1, offering an overview of the activities of the Panel since SC63. Gabon informed Contracting Parties that Zambia had assumed the role of the Vice-Chair of the Panel, and thanked the outgoing Vice-Chair and the representative of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) for their hard work. Zambia highlighted the updating of several CEPA resources and the revision of the CEPA handbook, welcome brochures for new Focal Points, and a series of

digital resources that can be customized by Contracting Parties. Gabon reported that the Panel agreed that renaming the Programme could have benefits, suggesting “People and Wetlands” or “People and Wetlands Programme of the Convention on Wetlands.”

148. Contracting Parties thanked the CEPA Oversight Panel for its work and suggested approving the report. A Standing Committee member suggested further discussions at COP15 on a name that describes the programme’s activities. An observer recognized that changing the name can be a complex task but stressed that identifying a name that is more accessible than an acronym would be useful.
149. Interventions were made by Czechia on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Gabon, Sweden and MedWet.

**Decision SC64-16: The Standing Committee took note of the Report of the CEPA Oversight Panel as found in document SC64 Doc.15.1.**

Agenda item 15.2: Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Draft resolution on CEPA
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150. The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.15.2, reminding Contracting Parties of Decision SC63-24 instructing the Secretariat to prepare the draft resolution, reflecting on the consolidation of Recommendations and Resolutions on CEPA 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 Secretariat stressed that the aim of the draft resolution is to have a single resolution on CEPA-related matters, further expressing support for the recommendation to change the name of the programme to “People and Wetlands”.
151. Standing Committee members thanked the CEPA Oversight Panel and the Secretariat for their work. One member stressed that CEPA activities are voluntary and aspirational, suggesting softer language “inviting” Contracting Parties to take up activities rather than “calling upon” or “urging” them. On future operations of the CEPA Oversight Panel, annexed to the document, the same member suggested providing guidance to Contracting Parties regarding the identification of potentially interested and qualified nominees for the CEPA Oversight Panel and identifying communication gaps that should be prioritized before proposing specific actions. Following discussions on future operations, the Standing Committee decided to task the current CEPA Oversight Panel with further discussion of the process.
152. Standing Committee members further suggested: square bracketing a paragraph requesting the CEPA Oversight Panel to continue to monitor and report on implementation of the CEPA Programme at national and international levels, noting extensive workload and that focus should be on guiding Contracting Parties rather than monitoring them; adding text noting that World Wetlands Day is an important tool, in particular for raising awareness on Convention issues and for inspiring Contracting Parties in organizing their national activities; and making CEPA resources and tools available for National Focal Points.
153. Interventions were made by Canada, Czechia on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Libya on behalf of the Contracting Parties of the Africa region.

**Decision SC64-17: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.15.2 on Communication, capacity building, education,**

**participation and awareness (CEPA) to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 14: Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

154. The Secretariat presented document SC64 Doc.14, noting that it covers the main activities undertaken since SC63 and highlighting the results achieved. The Secretariat highlighted active engagement in Conferences of the Parties of the Rio Conventions, drawing attention to the sixth Joint Work Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Wetlands, and noted that Annex 1 contains a related draft resolution.
155. Many Standing Committee members expressed appreciation for the Secretariat's work and for the draft resolution. Some members suggested assessing the impact of the Secretariat's activities to enhance visibility and build synergies, noting that such an assessment could guide the prioritization of activities that have the highest impact.
156. On the draft resolution, some members suggested referring to "voluntary" land-degradation neutrality targets as well as to the the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and "the" Paris Agreement. A member suggested amendments on a paragraph on raising awareness of the vulnerability of wetlands and their ecosystem services related to climate change.
157. Others noted that: the Bern III Conference on cooperation among the biodiversity-related Conventions is not a multilateral forum open to all, suggesting "noting" its outcomes rather than "welcoming" them; and that the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, also known as the Water Convention, is not a global convention.
158. Standing Committee members further proposed: adding reference to UNEA Resolution 6/4 on promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments; "welcoming" rather than "endorsing" the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; deleting a paragraph urging Contracting Parties to strengthen their efforts to complete, maintain and update national wetland inventories, noting overlap with other agenda items; and including as an annex the decision tree for when cooperative agreements should be used, enabling Standing Committee Decision SC63-08 to be repealed .
159. The Water Convention highlighted ongoing cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands, stressing that since 2016 the Water Convention has been global, including 12 Parties from Africa.
160. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Czechia for the European Union, Japan, Kenya on behalf of the Contracting Parties of the Africa region, Sweden and the Water Convention.

**Decision SC64-18: The Standing Committee:**

- i. **took note of the progress since the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee in implementing Resolution XIV.6 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*; and**



- ii. **instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.14 on enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies in partnership with multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

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

- 161. The Secretariat presented the report contained in document SC64 Doc.10, highlighting updates on relevant workstreams that contribute to the support mechanism to Contracting Parties for the completion of national wetland inventories.
- 162. Contracting Parties welcomed progress on the national wetland inventories support mechanism and suggested, among other things: further expanding the mechanism; encouraging members to develop national wetland inventories in their national contexts; exploring the potential of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and remote sensing; and providing additional guidance materials on carbon storage in wetlands, noting that relevant data would be useful for national reporting under the UNFCCC.
- 163. Interventions were made by Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, and Indonesia.

**Decision SC64-19: The Standing Committee:**

- i. **noted the progress of the Secretariat in providing a support mechanism to Contracting Parties for the completion of national wetland inventories; and**
- ii. **requested the Secretariat to further expand the national wetland inventories support mechanism, including through the mobilization of resources and partnerships, to offer further training and technical support.**

Agenda item 22.3: Draft resolution on the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

- 164. The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution contained in SC64 Doc.22.3, highlighting it would authorize the Standing Committee, rather than the COP, to determine the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award categories and eligibility criteria as noted in paragraph 6, and noted that the proposed resolution would replace Resolution XIV.9 and its annexes.
- 165. Contracting Parties opposed forwarding the draft resolution for consideration by COP15, with one member proposing corresponding amendments to the relevant paragraph in the draft resolution on the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee contained in document SC64 Doc.13. One Standing Committee member provided suggestions for amending Resolution XIV.9 to address challenges with the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards process. Another member cautioned against reinventing Award criteria every triennium and questioned whether additional flexibility is necessary, voicing preference for an amended draft resolution that would address implementation challenges of Resolution XIV.9. One Contracting Party, on behalf of a region, voiced their satisfaction with Resolution XIV.9, noting it provides a suitable framework for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards.
- 166. Interventions were made by Canada, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-20: The Standing Committee decided not to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.22.3 for consideration by the Conference of the Contracting Parties.**

Agenda item 17: Work plan of the Secretariat for 2025

167. The Secretariat presented document SC64 Doc.17, noting that the annual work plan for 2025 is annexed to the document. The Secretariat highlighted the plan's structure, stressing that COP15 made it necessary to start preparations earlier than usual and emphasizing that, following decisions at COP15, the activities will be reviewed as appropriate.

**Decision SC64-21: The Standing Committee took note of and approved the Secretariat's integrated Annual Plan for 2025 as presented in document SC64 Doc.17.**

Agenda item 23: Draft resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2025-2028

168. The Secretariat introduced the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.23, noting that the related Resolution XIV.7 contains two sections: one providing overall guidance on the operations of Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), including operational guidelines; and the other listing the RRIs endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention. Stressing the desire to separate long-term elements of the draft resolution from those requiring updating at each COP, the Secretariat noted that an updated list of RRIs approved to operate for the next intersessional period 2025-2028 is included in the document.
169. Standing Committee members welcomed the draft resolution. A Contracting Party highlighted the need to provide RRIs with appropriate funding. Following a request by MedWet to add text outlining the budgetary mechanisms by which it is funded, a Contracting Party stressed that this does not imply in any manner that any Contracting Party is obliged to contribute to the budget of MedWet, which remains voluntary, requesting that this be included in the meeting's report.
170. Interventions were made by France, Italy, Madagascar for Zambia, Sweden and MedWet.

**Decision SC64-22: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.23 on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2025-2028 to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 22.1: Report of the Subgroup on COP15

171. Zimbabwe reported on the state of preparedness for COP15, providing a comprehensive overview of completed and ongoing activities. Zimbabwe highlighted a whole-of-government approach, providing details regarding: the venue; room allocation for various meetings; other related infrastructure including linked to accommodation, transport, food and volunteers; the welcome reception and cultural activities; exhibition areas and pavilions; and planned excursions.
172. Contracting Parties thanked Zimbabwe for the preparations. Following comments by Parties, Zimbabwe reassured them that each regional group will have an allocated meeting room, that all dietary requirements will be available, and that additional space for rent by delegations will be available, if needed.

173. Interventions were made by Australia, Indonesia and Italy.

**Decision SC64-23: The Standing Committee took note of the presentation of COP15 preparations by Zimbabwe.**

#### **15:00 – 18:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

##### Agenda item 22.2: The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards

174. Zimbabwe announced the recipients of the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards in three categories:

- Laura Gonzalez, Executive Director of Marea Verde in Panama, recognized with the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Innovation;
- Iman Ebrahimi, CEO and Founder, Avaye Boom Bird Conservation Society, Islamic Republic of Iran, recognized with the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for Young Wetland Champions; and
- Dayana Blanco Quiroga, Co-Founder Uru Uru Team and Indigenous leader in Bolivia, recognized with the Ramsar Wetland Indigenous Peoples Conservation and Wise Use Award.

175. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited the Secretariat to inform the recipients individually.

##### Agenda item 9: Financial and budgetary matters

176. The United States of America, as Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, provided a report on progress in the Group's discussions, noting that despite much progress achieved, additional time would be required to conclude the work.

177. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited the Co-Chair to report back to plenary on Friday morning.

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

178. Poland, delegated by the contact group to report back to plenary, said that participants in the group had agreed to work with the draft resolution contained in Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.7.2, but found that the current draft is too prescriptive. Poland reported that the group noted the limited time available to start working on a new draft resolution and identified, as another option, postponing the issue to the next triennium.

179. Several Standing Committee members highlighted the lack of a legal basis for the process to recruit a new Secretary General, underlined that discussing the draft resolution at COP15 would enhance inclusivity and legitimacy of the process, and urged submission of the draft resolution to COP15 for its consideration. One Standing Committee member noted that, with either option, a Standing Committee decision or a COP resolution, the Standing Committee would play a central role in the recruiting process, but that all Contracting Parties should be involved to decide on the modalities of the recruiting process.

180. One Standing Committee member expressed concern that, due to much work remaining to be done to finalize the draft resolution and in light of the slow progress during the past two years on this matter, submission of the draft resolution to the COP would be premature, suggesting that the Standing Committee continue working on the draft resolution in the next triennium. Another member suggested that a working group on this matter could be established at COP15.
181. Several Contracting Parties reiterated their preference to forward the draft resolution to COP15 for its consideration.
182. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-24: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit in square brackets the draft resolution on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General, contained in Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.7.2, to COP15 for its consideration.**

Agenda item 25: Draft resolution on the Status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance
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183. The Secretariat presented the draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.25, highlighting the need for Contracting Parties to submit, in a timely manner, data and information to update Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) and encouraging them to use existing resources and opportunities offered by the Convention to address ecological changes and improve monitoring mechanisms, including the Montreux Record.
184. A Contracting Party called for developing modalities for the provision of relevant technical support, in particular to least developed countries.
185. An IOP welcomed the draft resolution, stressing that the IOPs are ready to provide support, and highlighting the Red Alert System developed by the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands, which recently issued a red alert warning for the Camargue in France and the Narta Lagoon in Albania.
186. Interventions were made by Madagascar for Zambia, and Wetlands International.

**Decision SC64-25: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.25 on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance to COP15 for its consideration.**

Agenda item 27: Report of the Secretariat on proposals on strengthening the process to include a Site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance
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187. The Secretariat introduced the report contained in document SC64 Doc.27, providing background information on the issue and highlighting the decision to revise document SC63 Doc.23 to more accurately reflect the views of the Legal Advisor, further tasking a group of interested Contracting Parties to review the proposed actions and provide additional recommendations to strengthen the process. The Secretariat noted that interested Parties had met twice and that the challenges, proposals and proposed actions, as well as the views of the Legal Advisor, are presented in Table 1 of document SC64 Doc.27, grouped under four

themes: location of a site being designated or being modified to extend its boundary; transparency; capacity of Contracting Parties; and capacity of the Secretariat.

188. A Standing Committee member suggested that the process include cases in which Wetlands of International Importance are to decrease in area, adding that users could be automatically notified regarding significant changes in the RIS with an option to opt in or out of such notifications.
189. Regarding the suggestion to add a suggested checkbox in the RSIS to allow Contracting Parties to indicate whether a site being designated or extended is in an area under dispute, some Standing Committee members urged that this information be included for existing sites.
190. Several Parties agreed with continuing discussions in the 2025-2028 triennium. Some members noted that the document does not include all opinions expressed, emphasizing that the group of interested Parties held divergent views.
191. Some members underscored that the current report only proposes taking note of the recommendations, and suggested that work continue to analyse the best way to implement the recommendations and to draft a resolution for the COP. One believed that the current conduct with regard to Sites in disputed territories is in breach of international law, stressing that, beyond a clear moral obligation to address the issue, there is also a legal liability moving forward.
192. Some members expressed concerns over the postponement of a decision on the matter, emphasizing that work already done and included in the document should not be disregarded.
193. Discussions on the way forward focused on whether the group of interested Parties should continue work in the next triennium or whether a working group should be established for further deliberations. Parties further discussed the mandate of the group for the next triennium, the envisaged outcome of the process, and whether decisions on the recommendations should be taken by the Standing Committee or the COP.
194. Following a suggestion by the Chair of the Standing Committee, it was agreed that the work of interested Parties should extend into the next triennium, with a report back to the 67th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC67) for the Standing Committee to consider any further actions.
195. Interventions were made by Algeria, Argentina, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Gabon, Japan, Madagascar, Morocco, Pakistan, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Decision SC64-26: The Standing Committee took note of the report and decided to extend the work of interested Contracting Parties into the next triennium, and instructed the Secretariat to present to SC67 an updated report reflecting further suggestions from Parties on strengthening the process to include a Site on the List of Wetlands of International Importance, for SC67 to consider any further actions.**

Agenda item 29.6: Proposed draft resolution on improving the terms of reference for the Executive Team and the Management Working Group (continued)

196. Sweden announced the withdrawal of the draft resolution on this subject but recommended a working group be established, potentially at SC66, to examine avenues for improving the functioning of the Executive Team and the Management Working Group. One Standing Committee member voiced support for establishing such a working group.

Agenda item 29.12: Proposed draft resolution on assessing wetland vulnerability (continued)

197. The Republic of Korea reported that, after consultations with Contracting Parties, most brackets in the draft resolution on assessing wetland vulnerability had been resolved and that a revised draft resolution had been made available in document SC64 Doc.29.12 Rev.2.
198. Standing Committee members suggested amendments, including on the provision of additional funding to enhance capacity building, which one member opposed, and a suggestion to refer to “developing countries” instead of “Contracting Parties in Africa”.
199. The Republic of Korea noted that the proposed paragraph on the provision of additional funding could be deleted, since the notion of facilitating training, workshops, and resource sharing is captured in another paragraph.
200. Interventions were made by Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Indonesia and Republic of Korea.

**Decision SC64-27: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.12 Rev.2, on assessing wetland vulnerability, to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.3: Proposed draft resolution on strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (continued)

201. China thanked Contracting Parties, observers and the Chair of the STRP for their input to the draft resolution on strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and highlighted amendments in the revised draft resolution contained in SC64 Doc.29.3 Rev.1.
202. One Contracting Party, on behalf of a regional group, proposed an amendment to the title of the draft resolution to better capture its scope.
203. Interventions were made by China and Hungary on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

**Decision SC64-28: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.3 Rev.1, on strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of waterbird flyways, to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.4: Proposed draft resolution on promoting incorporation of frontier technology and traditional ecological knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management, and wise use (continued)

204. China thanked Contracting Parties and the Chair of the STRP for their input to the draft resolution on promoting incorporation of frontier technology and traditional ecological knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management and wise use, and highlighted amendments in the revised draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.4 Rev.1.
205. Standing Committee members and the Chair of the STRP provided further amendments, including on technology and knowledge sharing, with one suggesting that technology and knowledge sharing should occur on “voluntary and mutually agreed terms”, and another requesting that square brackets be inserted around this part of the text.
206. China assured the Standing Committee that the proposed amendments would be reflected in a revised draft resolution for consideration by the Committee on Friday.
207. Interventions were made by Brazil, China, Colombia, Japan and the Chair of the STRP.

Agenda item 29.10: Proposed draft resolution on recognition of river dolphins as key species for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in South America and Asia (continued)

208. Colombia presented a revised draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.10 Rev.1, noting that the comments of Contracting Parties that had made interventions were included in the revised document, including a request to add reference to two river dolphin species.
209. Three Standing Committee members expressed support for the draft resolution.
210. Two members expressed concerns over the regional and taxonomic scope of the draft resolution, noting that focusing on specific species can open the door to the possible submission of many draft resolutions. They suggested extending the scope to a global draft resolution that highlights the importance of threatened species and their habitats, using such species as indicators of ecosystem health. A Party expressed similar concerns, opining that, pending further discussions, consensus was within reach but further work on the Resolution was needed.
211. Regarding a suggestion of encouraging Parties to report on actions to strengthen their management and conservation actions related to wetland habitats that are essential for river dolphins in national reports to COP16, a member expressed concern, noting that national reports are already extensive and burdensome.
212. Colombia expressed flexibility on placing the suggestion regarding national reports in square brackets, and highlighted a misunderstanding related to the drafting and the focus of the draft resolution. Colombia stressed that the draft resolution does not focus on species conservation but rather looks at the conservation of wetlands through the use of river dolphins as key species, which are an important indicator of the ecosystem functions of these wetlands.
213. The Chair of the Standing Committee suggested, with support from members, that the paragraph encouraging Parties to report on relevant actions in national reports to COP16 be put in square brackets and that that discussions on the draft resolution be continued at COP15.

214. Interventions were made by Argentina, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Colombia, France, Mexico and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-29: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.10 Rev.1, on recognition of river dolphins as key species for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in South America and Asia, to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

**Friday 24 January**

**10:00 – 13:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

Agenda item 11: Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group (continued)

215. The Chair of the Standing Committee reported on deliberations in the Friends of the Chair group on the Strategic Plan, highlighting the constructive atmosphere and spirit of compromise shown by participants, and shared his proposal that interested Parties submit their amendments to document SC64 Doc.11 in written form to the Secretariat by 13.00 on the same day. The Co-Chairs of the Strategic Plan Working Group (Canada and Colombia) would take the comments received by the Secretariat and prepare a revised text, incorporating any new amendments in square brackets. The revised document would then be submitted to COP15 for consideration.
216. One Contracting Party supported the suggested way forward. The Party sought clarifications regarding the process, specifically on: whether a list of Contracting Parties that had submitted comments to document SC64 Doc.11 within the given timeframe could be added to the meeting report; whether the revised document would be circulated before the end of SC64; and which procedure for modifications of draft resolutions will be applied during COP15, asking if amendments to draft resolutions are possible during the meeting of the COP and whether they require voting.
217. Two Standing Committees members questioned the feasibility of the proposed list of Parties., The Chair of the Standing Committee, supported by a Standing Committee member, expressed doubts that a revised version of the document would be ready for circulation before closure of SC64.
218. On the procedure for modifying draft resolutions, two Standing Committee members and the Legal Advisor stressed that the COP holds ultimate authority in the Convention and that text amendments to draft resolutions forwarded by the Standing Committee are possible at any point during COP proceedings until a decision has been taken on its approval.
219. One Contracting Party and a Standing Committee member sought further clarifications on procedure, requesting that their questions and respective clarifications on the matter be included in the meeting's report. The Party asked whether draft resolutions submitted by the Standing Committee containing square brackets and those with clean text differ in their legal status and if Contracting Parties that are not Standing Committee members have the right to provide comments on all draft resolutions submitted to COP for its consideration, including those containing square brackets and those without.



220. The Legal Advisor noted that draft resolutions containing square brackets and those without have the same legal status, and that until a draft resolution is adopted, it remains open for amendments by Contracting Parties. The Legal Advisor added that brackets indicate a lack of consensus, and that adoption of a draft resolution is only possible when consensus on the matter is achieved; if brackets remain until the final session of the meeting, either a vote on the matter is conducted or the draft is withdrawn.
221. One Standing Committee member noted that all Contracting Parties must make every possible effort to reach consensus and only if all efforts have been exhausted and no agreement reached, the decision will, as a last resort, be taken by a vote. The member said that all Parties have the right to reopen text, provide proposals, assess whether consensus has been reached, and, if consensus is out of reach, request a vote on the proposal submitted.
222. The Chair assured the Standing Committee that statements on the procedure would be recorded in the meeting's report and reiterated his earlier proposal.
223. Interventions were made by Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Sweden and the United States of America.

**Decision SC64-30: The Standing Committee:**

- i. took note of the report of the Strategic Plan Working Group in document SC64 Doc.11;**
- ii. invited interested Parties to submit their amendments to document SC64 Doc.11 in written form to the Secretariat by 13.00 CET on 24 January;**
- iii. asked the Co-Chairs of the Strategic Plan Working Group to take the comments received by the Secretariat and prepare a revised document, incorporating any new amendments in square brackets; and**
- iv. instructed the Secretariat to publish the revised document on the Convention website and forward it to COP15 for consideration.**

Agenda item 29.7: Proposed draft resolution on rights of nature in wetlands (continued)

224. Sri Lanka thanked Contracting Parties for their comments on the draft resolution on rights of nature in wetlands, noting that, after careful consideration, it had decided to withdraw the draft resolution. Sri Lanka highlighted that despite the concept's increasing recognition in different countries, the ambitious character of the draft resolution may require additional time for consideration at the global level, and invited all Parties to further engage in discussions on rights of nature and learn from positive cases of their application.

Agenda item 26: Report of the Working Group on RIS Updating (continued)

225. Australia thanked Contracting Parties for their comments and noted that proposed amendments had been included in document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2, with divergent views being reflected in square brackets. On creating a notification process for review of Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), Australia noted that some suggestions had been moved from the draft resolution to the proposed Standing Committee decision, because the relevant request was for Standing Committee not COP. On a request to remove the practitioner's guide for designation of Wetlands of International Importance and updating of Ramsar Information

Sheets, prepared by the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA), the RRC-EA underscored that the product is technically and scientifically sound, developed in collaboration with international experts, and that it provides guidance for different regional contexts. On establishment of a new working group, Australia proposed that such a group be established by the Standing Committee, with terms of reference (TORs) to be developed by the group at its first meeting.

226. One Standing Committee member, supported by two others, proposed that draft TORs for the working group be added as an annex to the draft resolution for consideration by the COP, highlighting the importance of providing Contracting Parties with the opportunity to guide the work of the working group instead of leaving the development of TORs to the group itself. One Standing Committee member voiced concern over the feasibility of developing draft TORs for consideration by the COP, suggesting that the COP delegate this task to the working group and request the Standing Committee to ensure appropriate consultation with Contracting Parties.
227. Two Contracting Parties voiced concern over procedure, with one Standing Committee member querying changes in the presented document relating to actions requested by the Secretariat and parts of the draft resolution on work to be conducted by the RIS working group in the 2025-2028 triennium, and requested clarity on whether the changes had been proposed by the working group or a Contracting Party. A Contracting Party called for reverting back to the proposed actions outlined in document SC64 Doc.26, noting that the original text was more balanced than the amended version of the proposed actions, which reflects only the view of a few members.
228. One Standing Committee member noted that amendments to the Working Group's draft resolution are permissible since it is the Standing Committee that submits draft resolutions for consideration of the COP, and proposed that points without consensus be highlighted by square brackets.
229. After one Contracting Party and the Legal Advisor pointed at inconsistencies on how amendments had been reflected in the revised document, Australia confirmed that all tracked changes in document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2 were to be understood as bracketed. One Contracting Party, supported by a Standing Committee member, urged the Secretariat to diligently review published revised documents to help ensure smooth negotiations.
230. Regarding the receipt of notifications on RIS updates, a Contracting Party noted that views in the Working Group on whether notifications should be mandatory or optional had diverged and urged that the amendment in document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2, introducing the qualifier "optional", be deleted since the nature of the notification would require further deliberation.
231. One Contracting Party, supported by a Standing Committee member and opposed by another Party, highlighted the practical benefit of optional notifications.
232. Following the Chair's suggestion to either revert to the actions suggested in SC64 Doc.26 and submit the draft resolution with all amendments contained in square brackets to COP15 for its consideration or establish a contact group to resolve the issue and report back to plenary, Contracting Parties expressed preference for submitting the draft resolution with all amendments in brackets.

233. Interventions were made by Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Georgia, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the RRC-EA.

**Decision SC64-31: The Standing Committee:**

- i. **took note of the progress report on the work of the Working Group on (Ramsar Information Sheet) RIS Updating established at SC63;**
- ii. **instructed the Secretariat to update its standard operating procedures for the review of RIS, considering the comments provided by Working Group members, as outlined in paragraphs 12 and 13 of document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2;**
- iii. **instructed the Secretariat to develop a mechanism to notify Contracting Parties of milestones in the RIS update process as highlighted in paragraphs 16 and 17 of document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2; and**
- iv. **instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.26 Rev.2 on RIS updating to COP15 for its consideration, with all proposed amendments in square brackets.**

Agenda item 29.4: Proposed draft resolution on promoting incorporation of frontier technology and traditional ecological knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management, and wise use (continued)

234. China thanked all interested Contracting Parties and the Chair of the STRP for their contributions, and presented a revised draft resolution, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.4 Rev.2.
235. A Standing Committee member offered minor amendments, suggesting referring to sharing relevant technology and knowledge on a voluntary “basis” and mutually agreed terms, as appropriate, as well as to “respect ownership of knowledge and maintain consistency with existing international agreements on intellectual property” rather than to encourage such efforts.
236. Interventions were made by China and Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

**Decision SC64-32: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.4 Rev.2 on promoting incorporation of new technology and traditional knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management, and wise use to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.5: Proposed draft resolution on achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (continued)

237. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presented the revised draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.5 Rev.1, thanking all members for their constructive comments and noting that some technical amendments improve clarity and consistency, while some text remains in square brackets.

238. Standing Committee members offered minor amendments, including: highlighting the importance of conservation management; encouraging Contracting Parties to update their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and National Biodiversity Finance Plans to prioritize the role of Wetlands of International Importance “in accordance with national priorities and circumstances”; and bracketing reference to funding from all “available” sources so that new funding sources are not excluded.
239. Interventions were made by Brazil, Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Decision SC64-33: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.5 Rev.1 on achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.2: Proposed draft resolution on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services [and the Freshwater Challenge] (continued)

240. Gabon presented a revised draft resolution, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.2 Rev.1, outlining Contracting Parties’ suggestions and subsequent amendments in the draft resolution. Gabon welcomed all contributions, stressing that it remains open to further improvements to the text.
241. On paragraphs inviting Parties and requesting the Secretariat to engage with the Freshwater Challenge, some Standing Committee members suggested deleting the mention of “particularly with Ramsar Administrative Authorities”, leaving the final decision to Parties.
242. A member suggested including a definition of freshwater ecosystems, suggesting it be limited to lakes and rivers to avoid overlaps with some existing Resolutions dedicated to other freshwater wetland ecosystems. The Chair of the STRP, supported by a member, cautioned against focusing strictly on lakes and rivers, noting that under the Ramsar wetland classification system, inland wetland categories include a range of wetland types, and suggested including reference to the classification in the draft resolution text to clarify the scope. Following discussions, while the aforementioned member suggested including that the term “freshwater ecosystems” refers to inland wetland types under the Ramsar classification system, the Chair of the STRP noted that some coastal wetlands can also be classified as freshwater ecosystems.
243. A member suggested bracketing two paragraphs: one inviting/encouraging Contracting Parties to report on progress regarding other processes, stressing that this would not be appropriate; and the other on “incorporating the scaling up of areas and the application of guidelines for restoration”, noting that it is unclear.
244. A member suggested to refer to nature-based solutions “and/or” ecosystem-based approaches, and to delete any reference to the report of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, in any form. The latter suggestion was objected to by another member, and so it was proposed that the reference should be bracketed.

- 245. A member proposed encouraging Parties to “consider” and pursue enhanced restoration.
- 246. Gabon noted that a number of paragraphs remain in square brackets, adding that suggested amendments will be taken on board and included in the draft resolution.
- 247. Interventions were made by Brazil, Canada, France, Gabon, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-34: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.2 Rev.1 on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.8: Proposed draft resolution on youth empowerment and integration: driving engagement in and the longevity of the Convention on Wetlands (continued)

- 248. Australia introduced the revised draft resolution contained in document SC64 Doc.29.8 Rev.1, thanking Contracting Parties and IOPs for their positive feedback and helpful inputs. Australia invited the input of the Chair of the STRP on engagement of early-career scientists with the STRP and highlighted minor issues to be resolved at COP15, suggesting, as compromise solutions: “urging” the Secretariat to inform the Youth Working Group of available funding opportunities; and “encouraging” Parties to empower their Youth Focal Point to participate in decision-making processes.
- 249. The Chair of the STRP emphasized that the modus operandi for participation of early-career scientists in the work of the STRP is to a degree already established, outlining relevant Resolutions that encourage youth to participate as observers and allow the Chair of the STRP to make relevant invitations. The Secretariat added that, according to current practice, working groups can invite IOPs and other bodies to participate as observers.
- 250. Standing Committee members expressed support and offered minor amendments, including to refer to a list of opportunities for further youth engagement rather than “funding opportunities”. A Standing Committee member underscored that the STRP should look for the best academic background and consider inviting youth to participate as observers.
- 251. Australia suggested bracketing the text on the STRP and the word “funding” for further discussions as suggested.
- 252. On specific tasks related to the Youth Workplan progress report, a member suggested: when considering targets to increase the number of youth delegates to Standing Committee and meetings of the COP to take into account “regional and vulnerability” considerations rather than “gender, regional and diversity” ones; and identifying and exploring with Parties ways to integrate youth considerations into existing and new wetland policies, strategies, processes and programmes “taking into account national circumstances, particularly in developing countries”.
- 253. Australia noted that these amendments refer to the report of the Youth Working Group, contained in document SC64 Doc.16 and approved by an earlier session of the Standing Committee. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted that these comments would be reflected in the meeting’s report.

254. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Mexico, Sweden and the Chair of the STRP.

**Decision SC64-35: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.2 Rev.1 on youth empowerment and integration: driving engagement in and the longevity of the Convention on Wetlands to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.1: Proposed draft resolution on strengthening action on culture and wetlands (continued)

255. Kenya introduced a revised draft resolution, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.1 Rev.1, thanking all Parties that had suggested amendments and looking forward to further discussions at COP15.

**Decision SC64-36: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.1 Rev.1 on strengthening action on culture and wetlands to COP15 for its consideration.**

Agenda item 29.9: Proposed draft resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles for the wise use of wetlands (continued)

256. India introduced a revised draft resolution, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.9 Rev.1, thanking Parties for their support and constructive suggestions. India highlighted that, in some cases, suggestions remain bracketed requiring further discussions, including to address linkages with other resolutions for cohesiveness.

257. Standing Committee members discussed terminology around Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and one member noted that the denomination used should remain bracketed.

258. A member suggested subjecting to the availability of resources a request to the STRP to submit a compilation of the methods, case studies and evidence base to support the integration of sustainable lifestyles in wetlands.

259. Another member, emphasizing that it does not oppose adoption of the draft resolution, requested to put it in square brackets to allow its concerns to be addressed at COP15. Following discussion, members decided not to bracket the draft resolution but to note in the meeting report that there may be considerable suggestions for amendments at COP15.

260. Interventions were made by Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, India, Mexico and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-37: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.1 Rev.1 on promoting sustainable lifestyles for the wise use of wetlands to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

Agenda item 29.11: Proposed draft resolution on education and participation as a basis for the management of urban and peri-urban wetlands (continued)

261. Colombia introduced a revised draft resolution, contained in document SC64 Doc.29.11 Rev.1, thanking all Contracting Parties for their active engagement and useful suggestions. Colombia suggested summarizing some of the proposals so that the text is more concise.

262. A Standing Committee member suggested deleting explicit reference to urban wetlands in Bogotá, noting that examples from individual cities should not be included.
263. Colombia explained that the original draft did not refer to specific cases and expressed flexibility to either bracket the specific example or delete it. It was agreed that the example would be deleted.
264. Interventions were made by Colombia and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-38: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.11 Rev.1 on education and participation as a basis for the management of urban and peri-urban wetlands to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.**

#### **14:00 – 17:00 Plenary Session of the Standing Committee**

Agenda item 9: Financial and budgetary matters (continued)
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265. The United States of America, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, presented its report on the activities of the Subgroup in document SC64 Com.2, and presented its recommendations for Standing Committee decisions, discussing the following sub-items: the report on financial matters contained in document SC64 Doc.9.1; the status of annual contributions contained in document SC64 Doc. 9.2 Rev.1; budget scenarios for 2026-2028 and a draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters contained in document SC64 Doc. 9.3 Rev.1; and potential financial implications of draft resolutions contained in document SC64 Doc. 9.4 Rev.1.
266. The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance noted that members of the Subgroup had reached general consensus on the report on financial matters, which also included discussions regarding the temporary use of reserve funds as a loan to complement voluntary funding for COP15 delegate support. The Subgroup further discussed the review of the interim estimates for the 2024 core budget, the status of voluntary contributions, and the estimated carry-forward of pre-committed and unspent funds.
267. On the 2026-2028 core budget scenarios, the Chair of the Subgroup noted that the Secretariat had originally proposed two scenarios of a 9.6% or an 11.3% increase compared to the 2023-2025 triennium to help alleviate constraints around staff retention and recruitment, and to fund two new positions. Following discussions, the Subgroup had decided to forward to COP15 four budget scenarios: the two aforementioned ones, and two additional ones representing a 0% nominal increase and a 4.1% increase compared to the 2023-2025 budget. The Chair of the Subgroup suggested that the Secretariat prepare a narrative and quantitative analysis, including policy implications for each scenario, to help Contracting Parties weigh these options.
268. On surplus funds, estimated to total CHF 991,000, the Subgroup had reviewed requests for their use, highlighting the relevant STRP requests regarding waterbird population estimates and Earth observation technologies. The Subgroup had arrived at a preliminary assessment for future consideration of surplus allocations pending COP15 decisions on the 2026-2028 core budget, and laid out potential options including: the two STRP requests; a proposal to support

outstanding contributions; shortfalls in some budget lines associated with the 0% nominal growth scenario for the next triennium's budget; and costs related to COP16.

269. A group of Parties suggested that the Secretariat provide further information in writing about the available amount of the surplus funds and further information on each of the options for use of these funds and including IT improvements for RIS updating reflected in document SC64 Doc.26, with the Secretariat assisting in estimating relevant costs, and that the surplus funds should not be used for outstanding contributions.
270. On the budget scenarios, a Standing Committee member expressed support for a 0% nominal increase for the core budget, noting that it is a consistent position of the member for all international organizations, to ensure that the budgets are managed to pursue cost effectiveness and efficiency in light of a challenging fiscal situation, and noting that additional requests should be covered by voluntary sources.
271. A member underscored that the Convention has been operating under 0% nominal growth budgets for 15 years while work has increased significantly, stressing the need to either increase the available resources to provide the Secretariat with long-term, predictable funding or to prioritize work programme tasks and activities to match expectations with investment. In a similar vein, another member emphasized the indispensable need to ensure that the operational arm of the Convention remains strong and fit for purpose in the future.
272. On the draft resolution, a member suggested "noting" rather than "noting with appreciation" the alignment of the Secretariat with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) policies and procedures for managing non-core funding.
273. Regarding the support within the budget for sponsored delegates to Standing Committee meetings, a member opposed reference to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to assess eligibility for sponsorship for delegate travel, suggesting utilizing the list contained in the 2025 World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report to classify Parties according to their level of development in line with other international agreements. The Secretariat responded that it would look into the WESP list to identify any financial implications of its use to determine sponsored travel eligibility. Some members noted that more time is required to consider the suggestion, proposing bracketing the suggestion on the WESP report.
274. Members reviewed Resolution XIV.1 on *Financial and budgetary matters* that includes reference to the OECD DAC list, seeking advice from the Legal Advisor. Colombia emphasized that Resolution XIV.1 does not provide a mandate to use the OECD DAC list for eligibility purposes, stressing that use of the list without a clear mandate provided to the Secretariat by the COP or the Standing Committee would not be appropriate, urging alignment with the practice of other multilateral environmental agreements, and requesting that this intervention be recorded in the meeting's report.
275. On surplus funds, a group of Parties cautioned against using the funds to cover outstanding contributions, suggesting a comprehensive discussion considering all solutions to address this issue. A member suggested utilizing them to complement activities on a temporary basis. Another urged using a portion of the funds to support the waterbird population estimates.



276. The Chair of the Subgroup on Finance thanked all members of the Subgroup and the Secretariat for their hard work, looking forward to continuing discussions in the months ahead.
277. Interventions were made by Argentina, Australia, Colombia, France, Georgia, Italy on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America as the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance.

**Decision SC64-39: The Standing Committee:**

- i. noted the interim estimates of the core budget results for 2024;**
- ii. noted the interim estimates of the status of the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2024;**
- iii. noted the estimated carry-forward of pre-committed and unspent funds in amount of CHF 1,120,000 from 2024 to 2025, as included in column C of the table in Annex 1 of the Subgroup on Finance report in document SC64 Com.2;**
- iv. approved the temporary use of reserve funds as a loan to supplement voluntary funding for COP15 sponsored delegate support as described in paragraphs 13, 14 and 20 of document SC64 Doc.9.1 and in Table 1 of document SC64 Com.2, to a maximum of CHF 486,000; and**
- v. noted the estimated surplus balances summarized in Table 1 of document SC64 Com.2.**

**Decision SC64-40: The Standing Committee:**

- i. took note of the status of annual contributions as of 31 December 2024;**
- ii. acknowledged the status of assessed contributions as of 31 December 2024 as part of the audit process;**
- iii. noted the actions listed in paragraphs 14, 16, 17 and 18 of document SC64 Doc.9.2 Rev.1 to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions by Contracting Parties; and**
- iv. noted the status of the voluntary contributions received from the Contracting Parties in the Africa region outlined in paragraph 19 of document SC64 Doc.9.2 Rev.1.**

**Decision SC64-41: The Standing Committee:**

- i. took note of the contents of document SC64 Doc 9.3 Rev.1;**
- ii. instructed the Secretariat to present the following scenarios to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties:**
  - 0% nominal increase compared to 2023-2025 budget, as in Annex 2 of document SC64 Com.2;**
  - 4.1% nominal increase compared to 2023-2025 budget, as in Annex 3 of document SC64 Com.2;**
  - 9.6% nominal increase compared to 2023-2025 budget, as Scenario A in Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.9.3 Rev.1; and**

- **11.3% nominal increase compared to 2023-2025 budget, as Scenario B in Annex 1 of document SC64 Doc.9.3 Rev.1;**
- iii. **requested the Secretariat to prepare a narrative and quantitative analysis explaining the respective costs and benefits, as well as policy implications for each scenario (e.g a SWOT analysis); and**
  - iv. **approved the draft resolution on the financial and budgetary matters to be considered at COP15, as presented in Annex 4 of the Subgroup on Finance report in document SC64 Com.2.**

**Decision SC64-42: The Standing Committee took note of the projected administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions submitted to the Standing Committee, which will be revised on the basis of the draft resolutions forwarded for consideration to COP15.**

Agenda item 24: Report of the Co-Chairs of the Independent Advisory Committee on Wetland City Accreditation

278. Czechia, as Co-Chair of the Independent Advisory Committee, introduced the report contained in document SC64 Doc.24, highlighting that a total of 32 applications had been received for new accreditation as a Wetland City and 18 applications for renewing their accreditation status, and outlined the evaluation procedure which resulted in 31 newly accredited Wetland Cities and 18 approved renewed accreditations, which were presented in a video.
279. Contracting Parties thanked the Independent Advisory Committee for their work and congratulated the accredited Wetland Cities, highlighting an upcoming Wetland Cities conference and an upcoming meeting of Wetland City mayors. Contracting Parties also lauded the Wetland City Accreditation as an important innovation to engage people in wetland conservation, a useful tool for recognizing sustainable urban planning and a certification that provides new energy and dynamism to the Convention.
280. Interventions were made by Chile, China, Czechia, France, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Morocco and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-43: The Standing Committee:**

- i. **took note of the process of evaluation of applications for new and renewed accreditation presented in this report; and**
- ii. **took note of the newly accredited Wetland Cities and the cities with renewed Wetland City Accreditation, as follows:**

**Newly accredited Wetland Cities:**

- **Argentina: Trelew**
- **Belgium: Mechelen**
- **Botswana: Kasane-Kazungula, Shakawe**
- **Chile: Valdivia**
- **China: Chongming, Dali, Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Jiujiang, Lhasa, Suzhou, Wenzhou, Yueyang**
- **France: Abbeville, Arles, Champagne**
- **India: Indore, Udaipur**
- **Iran (Islamic Republic of): Babol, Bandar Kiashar, Gandoman**

- **Japan: Nagoya City**
- **Morocco: Mehdy**
- **Philippines: Balanga City**
- **Poland: Poznan**
- **Republic of Korea: Gimhae, Mungyeong**
- **Serbia: Novi Sad**
- **Switzerland: Canton de Genève**
- **Zimbabwe: Victoria Falls**

**Cities with renewed Wetland City Accreditation:**

- **China: Changde, Changshu, Dongying, Haikou, Harbin, Yinchuan**
- **France: Amiens, Courteranges, Pont-Audemer, Saint-Omer**
- **Hungary: Tata**
- **Madagascar: Mitsinjo**
- **Republic of Korea: Changnyeong, Inje, Jeju, Suncheon**
- **Sri Lanka: Colombo**
- **Tunisia: Ghar el Melh**

Agenda item 28: Update of the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution XIV.20
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281. The Secretariat introduced the report contained in document SC64 Doc.28, providing an update on actions taken by the Secretariat from March 2024 to October 2024 pursuant to paragraph 18 of Resolution XIV.20, and highlighting conducted in-situ assessments of environmental damage to Ukraine's Wetlands of International Importance resulting from the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, and a workshop organized in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 31 May 2024.
282. A Contracting Party, on behalf of 46 countries including 14 Standing Committee members, welcomed the factual report by the Secretariat, commending the comprehensive effort to assess environmental damage to Ukraine's Wetlands of International Importance resulting from the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine. The Contracting Party noted that voluntary contributions by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America had been valuable in the actions undertaken by the Secretariat. Highlighting the exacerbation of ecological challenges and severe consequences for the region, including extensive harm to wetlands, due to the continued aggression by the Russian Federation, the Contracting Party called upon Parties to maintain solidarity with Ukraine. The Contracting Party reiterated its commitment to the objectives of the Convention and demanded that the Russian Federation cede its aggression and withdraw its military forces, noting this would enable the Ukraine to protect its wetlands. The Contracting Party urged the Secretariat to ensure that its findings and recommendations are duly reflected in its report to COP15.
283. A Contracting Party welcomed the approach taken and progress made by the Secretariat, and its ongoing coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme and other bodies to assess the effects on all Wetlands of International Importance, highlighting its support for the full implementation of Resolution XIV.20 and noting that important work remains to be done in light of the continued Russian aggression against Ukraine.
284. Interventions were made by Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Decision SC64-44: 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 30: Dates and venue of the 65th and 66th meetings of the Standing Committee

285. The Secretariat proposed dates and the venue for the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC65, 23 July 2025, in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe) and SC66 (31 July, 2025, also in Victoria Falls).

**Decision SC64-45: The Standing Committee decided to hold its 65th meeting (SC65) on 23 July 2025 and its 66th meeting (SC66) on 31 July 2025. Both meetings will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.**

Agenda item 31: Adoption of the report of the meeting

286. The Chair of the Standing Committee invited Contracting Parties to review the draft daily reports.

287. Participants noted corrections and clarifications regarding paragraph 16 of SC64 Rep.1, paragraphs 6 and 13 of SC64 Rep.3, paragraphs 27 and 32 of SC64 Rep.5 and paragraphs 12 and 37 of SC64 Rep.6.

288. A Contracting Party noted corrections on decision texts for Decision SC64-12, Decision SC64-15, Decision SC64-22 and Decision SC64-29.

289. Poland noted that it spoke on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, and Belgium noted that it spoke on behalf of the Europe region, in all their respective interventions at SC64.

290. The Chair of the Standing Committee noted that the report of the last day of the meeting would be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated among Standing Committee members for their review and that the final compiled meeting report would be published by the Secretariat, reflecting the amendments agreed.

291. Interventions were made by Brazil, Belgium on behalf of the Europe region, Canada, Colombia, France, Georgia, Poland on behalf of the Member States of the European Union, Sweden, the United States of America, the Chair of the STRP and Wetlands International.

Agenda item 32: Any other business

292. A Standing Committee member expressed concerns regarding the Rules of Procedure, suggesting that its proposal to amend them be circulated among Parties for review, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to inform the possible submission of a proposal for revision of the Rules to COP15 for its consideration.

293. Following a request by the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Legal Advisor noted that according to Rule 52 any Party can propose amendments by submitting a proposal to the Secretariat at least four months before the COP to which they are to be adopted. The Legal Advisor noted that, according to the practice of other multilateral environmental agreements

and UN bodies, if the amendments are cosmetic without substantive changes they can be adopted in plenary. If they are substantive, the COP may decide to establish an expert group with open-ended Party participation in which these amendments can be considered and submitted to the COP to take a decision. The Legal Advisor further explained that, following consideration of substantive issues, the COP may establish an intersessional body for further consideration; defer the matter to a subsequent COP; or take no further action.

294. Some members emphasized the need for clarity on the extent of the proposed amendments, stressing that the workload at COP15 will already be heavy and that small delegations may be overburdened, and querying whether such a submission would be wise at this stage in the triennium. A member suggested setting up a working group to work on the Rules.
295. Other members underscored that Standing Committee members and Contracting Parties have the right to consider the purpose of suggested changes and that the proponent has the right to submit proposed amendments.
296. The proponent of the suggested amendments emphasized that the current Rules of Procedure are impossible to follow in some cases and include contradictory provisions, and that a lot of time is spent trying to interpret the Rules. The proponent noted prior work which had taken place on reviewing them.
297. Interventions were made by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Gabon, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Sweden.

**Decision SC64-46: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to publish the proposal on amending the Rules of Procedure as an informal paper and to notify all Parties and invite comments.**

298. Indonesia, supported by Algeria, Colombia and Iran (Islamic Republic of), delivered a statement on the environmental and biodiversity situation in Palestine, especially Gaza, requesting it be recorded in the meeting's report. The statement is included in the present report as Annex 1.

Agenda item 33: Closing remarks
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299. The Secretary General congratulated delegates on their hard work, thanked the Secretariat, the interpreters, the translators, the rapporteurs and the Legal Advisor for their work during a long week and highlighted the upcoming World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2025.
300. The Chair of the Standing Committee wished delegates a happy Spring Festival and closed the meeting of the Standing Committee.

**Annex 1**  
**Indonesia statement at Ramsar SC64**  
**Agenda item 32 Any other matters**

**"PALESTINE ISSUE"**

[Ask to be recorded in the Report]

Thank you, Chair

Indonesia would like to use this opportunity, under this Agenda, to draw our attention to the environmental and biodiversity situation in Palestine, especially Gaza, which is **still** facing severe environmental and biodiversity destruction, including in the relation with mangroves and wetlands in the State of Palestine, **due to the aggression made by the Israel.**

Gaza is suffering from damaged farmland, contributed to loss of animals and plants, disease outbreaks and pollution, water crisis, hindered climate change mitigation and waste management, hence it has become a truly biodiversity disaster.

**This biodiversity disaster is affecting both natural ecosystem and the human population, especially to the Palestinian people.**

**"This natural disaster and humanity tragedy must be reversed"**

Thus, at this forum, as the Ramsar Convention recognizes the interdependence between Man and his environment, Indonesia calls to stop the environmental and biodiversity destruction in Gaza.

In this connection, Indonesia welcomes the Gaza ceasefire deal and urges reconstruction of Gaza, including towards the mangroves and wetlands in the State of Palestine

The Indonesian government hopes this ceasefire becomes permanent **and leads to lasting peace** in Palestine, which can only be achieved if Palestine is independent and sovereign in line with the two-state solution.

Peace in Palestine cannot be reached without an end to Israeli occupation and concerted efforts towards a two-state solution based on agreed-upon international standards.

I thank you, Chair