

**Final reports of the Chairs of retired working groups:  
Facilitation Working Group**

**Actions requested:**

Standing Committee is invited to take note of the report.

1. At its 13th meeting (COP13) the Conference of Contracting Parties, through Resolution XIII.3 on *Governance of the Convention*, decided to retire the working groups listed in Annex 1 of the same Resolution, and invited the Chairs of these subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to provide to the Standing Committee the final report on the outcome of the work of their subsidiary body, to be posted on the Convention website by the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee.
2. The final report of the Facilitation Working Group is overleaf.

## **The Facilitation Working Group closing report**

The Facilitation Working Group (FWG) was Co-Chaired by Uruguay and the United States and composed of representatives from Australia, Colombia, Finland, Japan, Kenya, Romania, Senegal, and Switzerland. The FWG would like to thank the Standing Committee for entrusting the group to work on Parties' behalf to explore means to improve the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention's governance structure and the functioning of the Secretariat. The Co-Chairs would also like to thank the FWG members for their robust participation and thoughtful contributions throughout the group's intersessional work, and the Secretary General for providing the group with relevant information to inform its work.

The FWG was created at SC-50 in response to Resolution XII.3, paragraph 58. At SC-51 the group was also asked to assume the duties requested in Resolution XII.4, paragraph 7b. At SC-53, the group reported that, following discussions with IUCN and the Secretary General, it was confident the SG and IUCN had established a cohesive working relationship and the Secretariat was on a solid path toward a new professional, legally and procedurally correct way of conducting the business of the Convention. The FWG considered that in light of the Parties' expressed restored faith in the Secretary General it could step back from its closer-than-usual facilitation role as mandated in Res. XII.3 and XII.4. SC-53 took note of the FWG's high satisfaction with the Secretary General and of the work the FWG had completed, and also extended the mandate of the FWG through Decision 53-04 and Decision 53-23 to undertake additional tasks on communication and governance.

The FWG engaged in extensive intersessional work between SC-53 and SC-54 in order to fulfill this mandate. The working group members ultimately developed several draft paragraphs to be included in various resolutions, as well as a stand-alone draft Resolution on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention, and presented these at SC-54 for approval of the Standing Committee. The FWG's outputs were generally welcomed by Parties and incorporated into the relevant DRs, although some concerns were raised about the working group's legal competence to submit a standalone draft resolution. Nevertheless, the Standing Committee decided to send the draft resolution to COP-13 for consideration. The details of this work and the outputs of the FWG are captured in the report and decisions of SC-54.

After SC-54, the FWG did not officially meet again, so the FWG's report to SC-54 captured the final activities of the working group.

It is important to highlight the sincere commitment of all the Parties to seek and achieve the highest possible efficiency and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention. All instances of meetings, whether in person or remotely, have been extremely enriching, revealing different views of how the Convention can be managed to achieve the best implementation to conserve wetlands.

The Co-Chairs of this working group wish to express their profound gratitude to all the Parties who have provided valuable contributions to this work and who have raised the level of discussions on topics of very high sensitivity. We encourage all

interested Parties to participate in future working groups, where they can freely and clearly express their different views regarding the best way to manage this important Convention.

We also hope that the results achieved by this working group will be considered the foundation for future discussions on the new challenges this Convention will have to tackle in order to continue with the noble task of protecting wetlands globally.