RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

57th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 24 – 28 June 2019

**SC57 Doc.27.1**

**58th meeting of the Standing Committee**

**Implications of joint meetings of the Standing Committee and
the Scientific and Technical Review Panel**

**Actions requested:**

The Standing Committee is invited to:

i. take note of the review provided on options for and implications of joint meetings of the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel; and

ii. consider the scenarios proposed and provide guidance to the Secretariat on how to proceed with the organization of STRP23 and SC58.

**Background**

1. Paragraph 16 of Resolution XIII.8 on *Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021* “requests the Secretariat to schedule the second STRP meeting in conjunction with the second Standing Committee meeting of the triennium, starting with the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee and continuing in future triennia, with a view to benefiting the development of the STRP’s work and more broadly fostering communication and synergies across the work of the Convention”.

2. In order to follow up on this request, the Secretariat has reviewed different options to organize the meetings “in conjunction” with each other, and has identified some implications regarding costs, logistics and agendas that are presented in this paper for consideration by the Standing Committee. The Secretariat seeks guidance on how to move forward. This paper presents the differences in cost, meeting logistics and agenda for two possible scenarios:

* Current approach: The current approach of separate meetings of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Standing Committee, with the STRP scheduled to meet from three to six months before the Standing Committee is presented for comparative purposes.
* Scenario 1 – STRP and Standing Committee meet back-to-back: STRP and Standing Committee meetings scheduled back-to-back over a two-week period at the IUCN Headquarters in Gland, as in Table 1.

*Table 1: Back-to-back meetings* *of the STRP and Standing Committee*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| First week | Second week |
| Meetings | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. |
| STRP |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| SC |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

* Scenario 2 – STRP and Standing Committee meet with two overlapping days: STRP and Standing Committee meetings scheduled back-to-back at IUCN HQ, with the last two days of the STRP meeting and the first two of the Standing Committee overlapping. The STRP meeting could start on Friday and end the following Tuesday, while the Standing Committee meeting could start on Monday and end the following Friday (see Table 2).

*Table 2: Back-to-back meetings with two overlapping days*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Meetings | Fri. | Sat. | Sun. | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. |
| STRP |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| SC |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Overarching considerations**

3. Any scenario that includes meetings on Saturday or Sunday will require meeting space outside of IUCN HQ. IUCN premises are not available on Saturdays or Sundays due to security and safety requirements. Therefore, arrangements would have to be made to have any weekend meetings in a hotel or other venue in the Gland/Nyon area. Should a joint event between the two bodies for the purpose of facilitating exchange and fostering communication be desired, it would need to be held at a larger facility outside of IUCN.

4. Any scenario that includes meetings on Saturday or Sunday would involve compensating Secretariat staff for overtime in accordance with Swiss law. This added cost is reflected in the table comparing the cost implications of each scenario, which is provided as Annex 1.

5. IUCN HQ does not have a meeting room large enough to accommodate a joint plenary of the STRP and Standing Committee meetings. The IUCN auditorium can hold a maximum of 100 participants. A joint STRP and Standing committee plenary would have between 150 and 170 participants. Two overflow rooms (the largest IUCN meeting room excluding the main plenary hall seats a maximum of 50 people) with a live video from the plenary could be used to accommodate delegates and observers who would not be eligible for priority seating in the main plenary hall. Alternatively, an external venue could be used, which given the capacity needed would probably be in Geneva. Note that using an external venue would result in additional cost and logistical complexity, particularly given that the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG) facility is not available from 2020 to 2022.

6. Scenarios with back-to-back or overlapping meetings will have implications on the capacity of Secretariat staff to prepare meeting documents in advance of the meetings in order to comply with the Rules of Procedure, manage document revisions and reports during the meetings, and provide follow-up documentation and reports following the meetings, given the volume and concentration of work to be completed in a single period. The current approach of separate meetings allows the Secretariat to provide focused and concentrated support for each meeting.

7. Options for participants in the STRP and Standing Committee to interact if the two meetings overlap is primarily limited to working groups or workshops involving a limited number of participants from the two bodies. Scenario 2, which includes overlapping meetings, leaves less time for each body to address its respective agenda.

8. Any scenario with combined meetings assumes that the STRP Chair is available and willing to commit to from 10 to 12 continuous workdays (including one day of travel at the beginning of the combined meeting and one day of travel following). The current STRP Chair has indicated his availability and willingness to be available for back-to-back or overlapping meetings.

**Evaluation**

9. Current approach: The STRP meeting is scheduled three to six months before the Standing Committee meeting. The main implications of this scenario are the following:

* Paragraph 16 of Resolution XIII.8 suggests a need to enhance opportunities for interaction between the STRP and the Standing Committee, as well as the science and policy interface between the two bodies.
* The Chair of the STRP participates in the Standing Committee.
* The current approach enables the STRP as a subsidiary body of the Convention to prepare its work plan and finalize outputs to submit to the Standing Committee meeting for approval.
* The current approach enables the Secretariat to focus on providing the services that are required for each meeting of the subsidiary bodies and for each body to have five days for its agenda.

10. Scenario 1: STRP and Standing Committee meetings scheduled back-to-back within a two-week period. The main implications of this scenario are the following:

* A continuing lack of opportunities for interaction between the STRP and Standing Committee given that the STRP meeting will be concluding and STRP members departing on a Friday and Standing Committee commencing on Monday with members arriving over the weekend.
* In such a case it would be unclear how the science and policy interface between STRP and Standing Committee meetings would increase.
* In order to allow for interaction, a joint activity could be organized during the weekend. This would require securing a facility outside IUCN and providing Secretariat staff compensation in compliance with Swiss law.
* Alternatively, a group of participants from each body could participate in the other body’s meetings. This would require participants to be available and willing to extend the duration of their trip to Gland and, in the case of sponsored delegates, would result in an increased expenditure for DSA.

11. Scenario 2: STRP and Standing Committee meetings scheduled back-to-back with two overlapping days. The main implications of this scenario are the following:

* The STRP would need to work outside IUCN premises on Sunday and Saturday in meeting rooms most likely rented from an area hotel or venue. The Secretariat would be required under Swiss law to provide overtime compensation for staff supporting the STRP meeting on Saturday and a Sunday.
* There would be opportunities for face-to-face interaction between the participants of the two meetings, to foster communication and synergies across the work of the Convention.
* However, given the size limitation of the main plenary room it would not be possible to organize a plenary joint session of the two bodies in the IUCN main plenary hall. Two additional overflow rooms with video monitors would be required to seat all participants. Space in Geneva could potentially be secured for a joint plenary, subject to the considerations listed above.
* During overlapping days, the agenda of both meetings could include those items where interaction between the STRP and the Standing Committee would be most beneficial, which would require careful planning.
* During the overlapping days, it would be necessary to book all ten available IUCN meeting rooms for the working groups. This may be difficult based upon IUCN’s needs and willingness to make all meeting rooms available exclusively for Ramsar. It is possible that not all the rooms needed would be available.
* There would be a reduction in the duration of the meetings from five to three days to accomplish the specific work of each of the subsidiary bodies, as two days would be allocated to the joint meeting.
* It would not be possible for the STRP to prepare outputs to be presented for Standing Committee’s consideration (e.g. at the start of the triennium the preparation of the work plan requires consultation before is submitted to the Standing Committee).

12. The estimated cost implications of Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 are presented in Annex 1.

**Annex 1**

**Scenarios and their cost implications**

|  |  **The current approach of separate STRP and SC meetings at IUCN HQ** | ***Scenario 1* STRP and SC meetings organized back-to-back over 2 weeks** | ***Scenario 2* STRP and SC meetings organized back-to-back with two overlapping days**  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **STRP** | **Standing Committee** | **STRP** | **Standing Committee** | **STRP** | **Two joint STRP / SC days** | **Standing Committee** |
| **Cost Implications (CHF)** | Travel 1) - 36,800 | Travel 2) - 29,900  | Travel 1) - 36,800 | Travel 2) - 29,900 | Travel 1) - 36,800 |  | Travel 2) - 29,900 |
| Coffee breaks - 2,835  | Coffee breaks - 6,825 | Coffee breaks - 2,835 | Coffee breaks - 6,825 | Coffee breaks - 1,701 | Coffee breaks - 3,864 | Coffee breaks - 4,095 |
| Technical equipment and assistance - 6,500 | Technical equipment and assistance - 9,350 | Technical equipment and assistance - 6,500 | Technical equipment and assistance – 9,350 | Technical equipment and assistance – 2,400 | Technical equipment and assistance – 5,800 | Technical equipment and assistance – 6,300 |
|  | Interpretation - 31,410 |  | Interpretation -31,410 |  | Interpretation -12,564 | Interpretation - **18,846** |
|  | Rapporteur - 5,840 |  | Rapporteur - 5,840 |  | Rapporteur - 2,336 | Rapporteur - 3,504 |
| STRP Chair Travel – 2,052 | STRP Chair Travel – 2,052 | STRP Chair Travel - 3,262Joint event to facilitate interaction and exchange (cost TBD) | STRP Chair Travel - 2,778Rented space and logistics for Saturday & Sunday - 7,992Staff overtime and compensation for weekend work - 8,700 |  |  |
| **Subtotal STRP: 48,187** | **Subtotal SC: 85,367**  | **Subtotal STRP: 49,397** | **Subtotal SC: 83,325**  | **Subtotal STRP: 60,379** | **Subtotal STRP and SC: 24,564** | **Subtotal SC: 62,645** |
| **CHF 133,554** | **CHF 132,722** | **CHF 147,580** |

1. STRP travel: 16 sponsored participants
2. Standing Committee travel: 13 sponsored delegates