

## Report of the Working Group on the Review of the Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention

### Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of this progress report on the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group; and
- ii. take note that the Working Group will meet on 22 June 2020 and will report on further progress and tasks planned to SC58.

### Report on progress and future tasks

1. Resolution XIII.5 *Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention* adopted a process to review the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention 2016-2024 (SP4) and requested “the Standing Committee, at its 56th meeting (SC56), to establish a Strategic Plan Working Group to conduct the review of the fourth Strategic Plan” (paragraph 20). The review process, its scope and modalities are outlined in Annex 1 of the Resolution.
2. Standing Committee at its 56th meeting (SC56, October 2018) established the Strategic Plan Working Group (WG). Its members are: Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Benin, Bhutan, the Dominican Republic, Oman, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda and the United States of America.
3. The WG provided an update on its progress to SC57 in document SC57 Doc.9, describing notably:
  - The development of a template for the Contracting Parties “to evaluate their efforts in relation to the implementation of the fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024” (paragraph 8, Annex 1 of Res. XIII.5). The template was sent to all Parties on 11 April 2019. Responses from 26 Parties were received in time for SC57,.
  - The development of terms of reference for a consultant to be contracted by the Secretariat to assist with the review process (paragraph 11, Annex 1 of Resolution XIII.5).
4. The WG met on 24 June 2019 prior to the opening of SC57 and provided an additional report to the Standing Committee on the outcomes of this meeting (SC57 Com.4), noting the election of Uganda as Chair of the WG and making a number of recommendations.

5. Based on the recommendations of the WG, the Standing Committee took the following decisions:

Decision SC57-06: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to share the shortlisting assessment of the candidates with the members of the Group, and include the Chair of the Working Group in panel interviews of the shortlisted candidates for the consultancy.

Decision SC57-07: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to proceed expeditiously with the appointment of the consultant and inception of the project work plan, in order that it might be well advanced before the end of 2019, to enable the submission of an advanced draft report to SC58 in 2020.

Decision SC57-08: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to organize an inception meeting with the selected consultant on their appointment, to define detailed timelines and outputs, in light of existing processes such as the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) in October 2020 and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Decision SC57-09: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to seek further responses from Contracting Parties to the survey on implementation of the current Strategic Plan, and invited regional representatives of the Standing Committee to encourage Parties in their respective regions to respond.

6. The WG finalized its work plan, which is included in the present document at Annex 1, on 24 July 2019, and appointed a consultant (the Wolf Group) on 12 August 2019 to assist with the review.
7. After further responses were sought from Contracting Parties, ultimately 44 Parties responded to the survey. In addition, the survey was sent to members and experts of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), International Organization Partners (IOPs) and partner organizations that had been invited to participate in the preparation of the fourth Strategic Plan. There were no responses from these groups. The consultant was able to conduct initial phone consultations with the Chair of the STRP, the lead authors of the *Global Wetland Outlook* and two of the six IOPs.
8. The WG worked through email exchanges and held two teleconferences: 9 December 2019 and 16 March 2020. This resulted in instructions to the consultant to prepare a combined overview of the responses to the survey and the information submitted by the Contracting Parties in their National Reports to COP13, also taking account of the elements listed in paragraph 9 a) of Annex 1 of Resolution XIII.5.
9. During April 2020, the consultant is preparing, with further guidance by the WG, a combined analytical overview using the 44 survey results and the National Reports submitted by Parties prior to COP13 to get a more granular understanding of Parties' implementation and issues with the Strategic Plan. This will enable the WG to understand whether there are similarities in responses and issues between regions, levels of economic development, country capacities, etc. The consultant is also reviewing and updating his analysis of any gaps between the Strategic Plan and the *Global Wetland Outlook*, the STRP's 2018 assessment of the state of the world's wetlands and their ecosystem services, and relevant reports and assessments of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

10. Resolution XIII.5 also addresses the need to develop a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention, *inter alia* to complement the work of the Strategic Plan Working Group (paragraph 26). The Convention's CEPA Oversight Panel has published the results of a survey among Parties and its recommendations to SC58 for a new approach (SC58 Doc.15.1). The Strategic Plan WG will liaise with the CEPA Oversight Panel in order to identify opportunities for including CEPA activities into the Strategic Plan. According to the decision and guidance to be provided by SC58, this may develop into a targeted collaboration with the CEPA Oversight Panel.
11. The WG will hold another physical meeting on 22 June 2020 prior to the opening of SC58 to review the analysis of the information currently being prepared by the consultant, to consider what is needed to conclude the consultancy and what is needed to complete the WG work plan, including proposed refinements to SP4, its targets and indicators, and a proposed framework and key elements for SP5 after 2024.
12. The Chair of the WG will report on the outcome of the meeting on 22 June 2020 with an in-session document to SC58.

## Annex 1

### Work Plan for the Strategic Plan Working Group (WG)

#### Timeline, key activities and outputs

<i>Timing</i>		<i>Deliverables</i>
<b>2019</b>	July August	<i>Secretariat</i> requests remaining Parties, IOPs, NGO observers and the STRP to provide input on their implementation of SP4 and contracts the consultant.
	August	<i>Secretariat</i> shares with the WG the report of the consultant selection panel and this Work Plan for the WG incl. consultant and Secretariat.
	September October	<i>Consultant</i> assesses, according to the indicators of SP4 (cf. <i>ToR, Res. XIII.5</i> ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inputs by Parties on their implementation of SP4,</li> <li>- implementation report by the Secretary General (COP13 Doc. 11.1),</li> <li>- inputs received by IOPs, NGO observers and the STRP,</li> <li>- conclusions of the Global Wetland Outlook,</li> <li>- gaps in the priorities of SP4 and weaknesses in its indicators,</li> <li>- relevant reports by IPBES, Agenda 2030, post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted, refinements to indicators suggested by the expert group in 2015, development of relevant indicators by other MEAs and relevant fora, and</li> <li>- <i>identifies</i> gaps between the scope of National Reports and SP4, and</li> <li>- <i>opportunities</i> to focus SP4 review more closely on a set of key priorities and for including CEPA activities in the SP4.</li> </ul>
	November	<b>Virtual meeting of the WG</b> to assess progress, with consultant and Secretariat, presenting initial findings and requests for strategic direction to the WG based on initial findings and their implications.
<b>2020</b>	February	<b>SC58 Document</b> with an advanced draft report on three elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress Report on implementation of SP4 (2016-2020),</li> <li>- Proposed Framework and key elements for SP5 (after 2024),</li> <li>- Proposed refinements to SP4, its targets and indicators.</li> </ul> <p><b>Virtual meeting of the WG</b> with consultant and Secretariat to comment the advanced draft before its submission.</p>
	March	Submission of SC58 document integrating WG comments.
	22 June	<b>Physical meeting of the WG</b> with consultant and Secretariat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- updates SC58 Document and its recommendations to SC58</li> </ul>
	22-26 June	<b>SC58 Considers recommendations and updates by the WG.</b>
<b>2020</b>	September	Submission of National Reports nine months before COP14 (probably June 2021).
	October	Adoption of post 2020 biodiversity framework by CBD COP15.

<i>Timing</i>		<i>Deliverables</i>
Oct./Nov.		Assessment by the Secretariat of National Reports for COP14.
November		<p><b>SC59 Document</b> with an advanced draft report with three elements to be submitted to COP14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress report on implementation of SP4 (2016-2020),</li> <li>- Basic elements for the preparation of a proposed Framework for SP5 (after 2024) indicating key elements for consideration at COP14,</li> <li>- Draft resolution with proposed refinements to SP4, its targets and indicators, applicable during the period 2021-2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Virtual meeting of the WG</b> with consultant and Secretariat to comment the advanced draft before its submission assuring that the most recent elements have been integrated (SC58, National Reports, CBD COP15, further elements).</p>
November		<i>Submission</i> of SC59 document integrating WG comments.
<b>2021</b>	February	<b>SC59 adopts the above documents for consideration at COP14.</b>
	June	<b>COP14 considers reports and adopts Resolution on SP4 refinements.</b>