

Process for preparation and review of draft resolutions

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. note the indicative timeline for events related to COP14, in paragraph 2;
- ii. note the guidance for the preparation of draft resolutions for COP14, as presented in Annex 1;
- iii. provide guidance to the Secretariat regarding its role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, and the processes for doing so both before and after SC59, as indicated in paragraph 11;
- iv. consider whether it is timely to reassess the regional processes for the pre-COP review of draft resolutions, as indicated in paragraph 14; and
- v. agree to follow the same process for consideration of draft resolutions followed at COP13 as indicated in paragraph 16.

Introduction

1. This document is provided by the Secretariat as a basis for discussion of the planning for documentation for the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14), both before and during the meeting, which will be held in the People's Republic of China in 2021. The Secretariat recognizes that it is vital for Contracting Parties to have timely access to the documentation they need to reach agreement on proposals and amendments in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

Timeline

2. At the date of this document being published, a date for COP14 has not been determined. The host country has indicated that it is considering dates between September and November 2021. For planning purposes, an indicative date of November 2021 has been used. The timeline below at Table 1, showing dates and deadlines relevant to the preparation of draft resolutions, can be adjusted accordingly once the dates for COP14 have been approved by the Standing Committee.

Table 1: Indicative timeline of events relating to consideration of draft resolutions for COP14

Date	Event
November 2021	14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14)
August 2021	COP14 documents published
May 2021	59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59)
March 2021	Submission of proposals for draft resolutions
February 2021	SC59 documents published ¹
February 2021	Pre-COP regional meetings

Preparation and submission of draft resolutions for COP14

3. The Secretariat has prepared guidance for the Contracting Parties on the preparation and submission of draft resolutions and other documents for COP14. This guidance is the same as that followed for COP13, with the exception that the timeline has been adjusted to reflect the indicative dates for COP14. The Standing Committee is requested to note the guidance, which is provided in Annex 1.
4. According to Rule 5.1 of the Rules of Procedure:

The Secretariat shall notify all Contracting Parties of the dates, venue, and provisional agenda of an ordinary meeting at least 12 months before the meeting is due to commence. The notification shall include the draft agenda for the meeting and the deadline for submission of proposals by the Contracting Parties, which normally shall be 60 calendar days prior to the opening of the Standing Committee meeting at which recommendations are made for documents for consideration by Contracting Parties at the Conference of the Parties.

The Secretariat will accordingly inform Contracting Parties of the deadline for submission of proposals, together with the dates for COP14 and SC59, at a future date.

Role of the Secretariat in the preparation of draft resolutions

5. At its 13th meeting (Dubai, 2018), the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution XIII.4, on *Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention*, in which, in paragraph 17, the Conference:

ENCOURAGES the Secretariat to re-engage with Parties, at their request, in preparing draft resolutions, so as to improve the quality of possible decisions that are tabled for consideration.

6. The Secretariat believes that this request results from the Secretariat's reduced involvement in assisting Contracting Parties in the preparation of draft resolutions before COP13. This approach was adopted in order to ensure the Secretariat's neutrality on issues that had not been discussed by the Conference of the Parties or the Standing Committee. The Secretariat wished to avoid aligning itself with any proposal that might not be agreed by the Parties.

¹ Includes publishing draft resolutions for consideration at SC59.

7. However, the Secretariat remains at the service of the Parties and will gladly respond to requests to provide advice to ensure that proposals for draft resolutions take into account the obligations of the Convention and the recommendations of the Conference of the Parties.
8. The Secretariat is conscious that any changes to the text must be minimal and not change the sense or substance of the proposals submitted to the Standing Committee. It is also aware that, as proposals have often been through many weeks or months of preparation by Parties, and perhaps through several consultations, the proponent may not wish the text to be changed by the Secretariat.
9. It is important to recall that, in accordance with Rule 34.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Contracting Parties:

The Secretariat will edit and finalize the proposals, on the basis of the recommendations of the Standing Committee, for distribution in the official languages to the Contracting Parties at least three months before the opening of the Conference of Parties, as required by Rule 10.

10. Given the provisions of Rule 34.3, the Standing Committee at SC59 will be in a position to give specific instructions to the Secretariat on each draft resolution to be submitted to COP14, which may include engagement with the proposing Party.
11. With these considerations in mind, the Secretariat seeks guidance from the Standing Committee regarding its role in engaging with Parties in preparing draft resolutions, as requested in Resolution XIII.4, and the processes for doing so both before and after SC59. It will then update the guidance for COP14 accordingly, and share it with Contracting Parties in good time before the deadline identified in accordance with Rule 5.1.

Pre-COP regional meetings

12. Draft resolutions that have been submitted are considered by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel if requested, at five regional meetings of Contracting Parties, at a meeting of the Standing Committee and then at a meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. They are thus considered at seven meetings before they are discussed at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat would like to ask whether Parties believe that this extended process is required; it seems to be more extensive than for other environmental Conventions.
13. Four further factors might be considered in relation to the review of draft resolutions at regional meetings of Parties before meetings of the Conference of the Parties:
 - a. Firstly, these regional meetings are not mandated by any Resolution nor referenced in the Rules of Procedure;
 - b. Secondly, it is a challenge to seek financial support for these meetings especially in the same year when financial support is also being sought for delegate travel to the COP;
 - c. Thirdly, given the potential ongoing challenges of travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenge of convening meetings in a particularly crowded schedule and the increasing attention to the environmental impact of travel may make participation for delegates difficult; and

- d. Other means such as holding regional meetings in the days before the COP could provide the opportunity for regions to discuss draft resolutions and prepare their positions.
14. The Secretariat suggests that it may be timely for Contracting Parties to reassess the regional processes for preparation of proposals for draft resolutions, with a view to confirming that best use is made of time and resources while ensuring that all Parties have the opportunity to participate in reviewing draft resolutions and in deciding on their adoption.

Consideration of draft resolutions and other documents at COP14

15. At SC54 the Standing Committee took note of document SC54-18.3 on *Preparation of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties Process for review of draft resolutions* (see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc54-183-preparation-of-the-13th-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-parties-process-for>) and invited Parties to provide comments and review a revised version at SC55, immediately preceding COP13, where the Secretariat presented document SC55 Doc.4.2 on *Process for reviewing draft resolutions* (see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc55-doc42-arrangements-for-cop13-process-for-reviewing-draft-resolutions-decision-sc54-11>)
16. This process was effectively implemented at COP13. The Secretariat proposes that this same process be followed for COP14 and that this process along with any proposed enhancements that would further the efficiency and timeliness for negotiating draft resolutions be presented to SC59 for approval.

Annex 1

Guidance note on preparation of submissions for draft resolutions

Process and timeline

1. The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14) will take place in 2021 in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. The dates of COP14 have not yet been proposed by the Host Country for approval by the Standing Committee.
2. According to Rule 5.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions is 60 days before the Standing Committee meeting at which recommendations are made for documents for consideration by Contracting Parties at the COP. Once the dates of the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59) is determined, the Secretariat will notify Parties of the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions.
3. The Secretariat encourages Contracting Parties to submit draft resolutions as early as possible in advance of the deadline, so that they can be published in the official languages of the Convention three months before SC59, with the other documentation for that meeting.
4. Early submission of draft resolutions will ensure that Contracting Parties have adequate time to review them in advance of SC59. An early submission will also enable the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel to consider the draft resolutions, if requested to do so, during its 24th meeting, tentatively scheduled for the first quarter of 2021, in order to make technical inputs where appropriate prior to SC59.
5. Submissions should be sent by email to the Documentation Officer at the following address: documents@ramsar.org. Any questions regarding the process or content of submission should be sent to the same address.

Content of submissions to Standing Committee

6. Documents submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee should include:
 - i) A summary introduction for the Standing Committee, including a list of the potential implications for the Secretariat budgets of the implementation of the Resolution;
 - ii) The text of the draft; and
 - iii) Any annexed guidance or text which the Conference of the Parties may adopt or endorse.
7. Existing Resolutions, which may provide useful models, are found on the Ramsar website at: https://www.ramsar.org/search?f%5B0%5D=type%3Adocument&f%5B1%5D=field_document_type%3A530&sort=field_sort_date&order=desc&search_api_views_fulltext=.

Guidance for each element

Summary introduction

8. The introduction should include as a minimum an invitation to the Standing Committee to review and approve the draft resolution for consideration at COP14.
9. In addition it may include background information to inform the decision of the Standing Committee. The rationale for the proposed draft resolutions should be made explicit within the preambular paragraphs.
10. The introduction should include a table indicating the potential impact on the Secretariat's core or non-core budgets of each action included in the operative paragraphs. The table should describe the action, and the cost in Swiss francs (CHF). Any recurrent costs should be made clear. The Secretariat can identify the sum required, if the submitting Party identifies the constituent actions, as in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Example of information on financial implications of implementing draft resolutions

Paragraph	Action	Cost (CHF)
20.REQUESTS the Standing Committee to prepare a summary report...	Secretariat to coordinate drafting project, consultant to draft report (10 days)	CHF 5,000 (one-off cost)

The resolution text

11. All paragraphs of a draft resolution, including preambular and operative paragraphs, should be numbered consecutively 1, 2, 3, etc., starting with the first paragraph of the preamble. Subparagraphs should be numbered i), ii), iii), etc.
12. Preambular paragraphs present the background to the actions proposed for agreement by the Contracting Parties in the operative paragraphs. They must begin with a verb in the form of a participle or an adjective (e.g. "Concerned", "Having considered", "Acknowledging", etc.).
13. Operative paragraphs contain the actions that the Contracting Parties recommend or agree to take. These paragraphs begin with an action verb (such as "Approves", "Calls upon", "Emphasizes", "Invites", "Notes", "Recommends", "Requests", or "Urges").
14. The verb used should correspond to the role of the body called to act. For example, it is appropriate: to encourage, call upon or urge Contracting Parties to act; to request an action of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP); and to instruct the Secretariat.

Annexes

15. The text contained in annexes may be approved, endorsed or acknowledged by the COP, according to the wording of the relevant operative paragraphs.
16. An annex may provide further background information and a link to an online document. Before the COP, a Contracting Party may submit such information as an Information Document. Information documents are not presented for discussion and are not translated by the Secretariat.

17. Annexes are numbered: Annex 1, Annex 2, etc., following the order in which they are referred to in the draft resolution. Each annex should start on a new page.
18. Paragraphs should be numbered consecutively 1, 2, 3, etc. Subparagraphs should be numbered i), ii), iii) etc. Bullet points may be used for lists, but note that numbering where possible is clearer.
19. Any tables or figures should be titled as such and numbered consecutively, e.g. *Figure 2: Process for identifying key ecosystem services*.

Suggested length

20. It is suggested that proposals for draft resolutions should be a maximum of 12 pages in length (6,000 words), including the summary introduction, the draft resolution and any annexes.
21. This limit will:
 - i) enable Standing Committee members and observer Parties to read all the documents, and understand the issues in advance of meetings;
 - ii) maintain the focus on the key issues and avoid discussion of unnecessary details in a crowded agenda;
 - iii) help the Secretariat publish related documents, such as the summary of costs of implementing the proposed draft resolutions, in good time; and
 - iv) save translation time and funds.

Role of the Secretariat

22. The Secretariat has requested guidance from the Standing Committee regarding its role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, as requested in Resolution XIII.4, and the processes for doing so both before and after SC59. This guidance will be updated if required and accordingly shared with Contracting Parties in good time before the deadline identified in accordance with Rule 5.1.

Template for submissions for draft resolutions to Standing Committee

This template provides a basis for the summary introduction and the text of the proposed draft resolution.

THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
59th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, XX Month 2021

SC59-xx

Draft Resolution on **[insert subject]**

Submitted by **[insert Contracting Party name]**

Action requested:

- The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached Draft Resolution for consideration by the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- [Insert any other actions requested of the Standing Committee]

Introduction

Information for Standing Committee
(delete this section if not applicable)

Financial implications of implementation

Paragraph (number and key part of text)	Action	Cost (CHF)

Draft Resolution XIV.xx

[insert subject]

1. RECALLING...;

2. ALSO RECALLING...;

3. FURTHER RECALLING...;

4. AWARE of ...:

i. This...;

ii. That...; and

iii. The other...;

5. ACKNOWLEDGING...; and

6. CONCERNED that...;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. AFFIRMS...;

8. REQUESTS...;

9. ENCOURAGES...;

10. ALSO ENCOURAGES ...;

11. URGES ...; and

12. CALLS ON... .