

Process for preparation, submission and review of draft resolutions

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. note the indicative timeline for events related to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14), in paragraph 3;
- ii. note the guidance for the preparation of draft resolutions for COP14, as presented in Annex 1;
- iii. approve guidance on the Secretariat role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, and the processes for doing so both before and after the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59), as proposed in paragraphs 8 to 12; and
- iv. instruct the Secretariat to follow for COP14 the process for review of draft resolutions applied at COP13, applying logistical refinements as appropriate.

Introduction

1. This document is provided by the Secretariat as a basis for discussion of the planning for the preparation and review of draft resolutions for the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14). 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.
2. As part of its September 2020 decision to cancel its 58th meeting (SC58), the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to edit and finalize a revision of document SC58 Doc.20.4 for its consideration with revisions reflecting the comments provided by the consultative group on the review of Resolutions and Decisions and taking into account 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.

Indicative timeline

3. At the date of publication of the present document (16 March 2021), a date for COP14 has not been determined. The host country has indicated that COP14 will take place in the fourth quarter of 2021. For planning purposes, an indicative date of November 2021 has been used. The indicative 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
21-25 June 2021	59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59)
May 2021 (approximately 30 days after publishing of draft resolutions)	Virtual pre-COP regional meetings
22 April 2021 (60 days in advance of SC59)	Submission of draft resolutions
23 March 2021 (90 days in advance of SC59)	SC59 documents published

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 draft resolutions, based on the dates for COP14 and SC59 as approved by the Standing Committee, in due course.

Preparation and submission of draft resolutions for COP14

5. The Secretariat has prepared guidance for the Contracting Parties on the preparation and submission of draft resolutions and other documents for COP14. This guidance, which is provided in Annex 1, is based upon the guidance prepared for COP13, but it has been updated reflecting comments received from the consultative group on the review of Resolutions and Decisions. The Standing Committee is requested to note the guidance.

Role of the Secretariat in the preparation of draft resolutions

6. At COP13, the Conference of the Contracting 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.

7. 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 Contracting Parties.
8. However, the Secretariat remains at the service of the Contracting Parties and will gladly respond to requests to provide advice to ensure that draft resolutions take into account the obligations of the Convention and the recommendations of the Conference of the Parties. To ensure fairness and transparency, the Secretariat suggests that this support is provided through capacity-building webinars (one for each official language) so that all Contracting Parties considering writing a draft resolution can participate.
9. The Secretariat may, at the request of the proponent(s) of a draft resolution, also provide limited technical support after the draft is submitted, e.g. to highlight incorrect formatting, language that may cause misunderstandings or incorrect use of terminology, and suggest simple ways these issues may be addressed. The Secretariat is conscious that any suggested 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 Contracting Parties, and perhaps through several consultations, the proponent may not wish the text to be changed by the Secretariat. Therefore the Secretariat will not incorporate its suggested edits unless the proponent(s) of the draft resolution confirm(s) in writing within two weeks that it concurs with those suggested edits.
10. The Secretariat will also prepare cover notes to accompany each draft resolution. These cover notes will be issued alongside the draft resolutions when they are published, and will include information on possible duplication with other draft resolutions, inconsistencies and technical errors that the Secretariat feels should be brought to the attention of Contracting Parties.
11. It is important to recall that following SC59, in accordance with Rule 34.3 of the Rules of Procedure:

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.

12. 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 revisions to each draft resolution to be submitted to COP14, which may include engagement with the proposing Contracting Party.
13. With these considerations in mind, the Secretariat seeks intersessional direction from the Standing Committee regarding its role in engaging with Contracting Parties in preparing draft resolutions, as requested in Resolution XIII.4 and submits the approach defined above for its consideration and approval.

Pre-COP regional meetings

14. Draft resolutions have in past triennia been considered at the regional pre-COP meetings of Contracting Parties and at a meeting of the Standing Committee before the final draft resolution text is considered at a meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. Some are reviewed by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, as provided for in Resolution XII.5, paragraphs 12 (iii) and 59 .
15. In accordance with Decision SC58-10, the Secretariat will facilitate preparation and implementation of virtual regional meetings with the support and advice of the Contracting Party Regional Representative members of the Standing Committee, to review draft resolutions.

Consideration of draft resolutions and other documents at COP14

16. 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 Contracting 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>).
17. This process was effectively implemented at COP13. The Secretariat suggests that the process be followed for COP14, applying logistical refinements as appropriate.

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 as of 18 February 2021 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. With the Standing Committee having confirmed that the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC59) will take place from 21 to 25 June 2021, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions is accordingly 22 April.
3. The Secretariat encourages Contracting Parties to submit draft resolutions as early as possible in advance of the deadline, ideally 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 any draft resolutions it is requested to review 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 an indication of the potential implications for the workload of the Secretariat and funding from the Convention's core budget that would be required for the implementation of the Resolution;
 - ii) The text of the draft resolution; and
 - iii) Any annexed guidance, tables or text which may be needed to provide ongoing context, guidance, or additional critical information and which would be included in the final resolution if adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

Further guidance on each of these elements is set out in sections below.

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=.](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=)

Drafting guidance

Suggested length

8. It is suggested that submissions should be a maximum of ten pages in length, including the summary introduction, the draft resolution text and any annexes. Shorter ones are most welcome.
9. This limit will:
 - i) enable Standing Committee members and other stakeholders 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.

Language

- Use short sentences and simple language to foster the greatest understanding.
- Use language and expressions that will be relevant long after the COP at which it is agreed, which may mean avoiding details about specific formats, methods, technical tools, etc..
- Use specific descriptions of timing, e.g., specific dates/years, or time frames that refer to specific meetings of the Convention on Wetlands.
- *Consider potential overlap with prior decisions of the Convention:* Contracting Parties should carefully review prior Resolutions and ensure that the subject and content of their draft resolution reflects truly new information or ideas and that they have not already been captured in existing Resolutions. Where they have been, Contracting Parties should request within their draft resolution the retirement of the prior Resolution(s) on this subject, and incorporate any still-relevant portions into the new text. Possible text is included as paragraph 15 of the annexed template for draft resolutions, at page 10 below.

Summary introduction for the Standing Committee

10. The introduction should include an invitation to the Standing Committee to review and approve the draft resolution for consideration at COP14 as part of the package with draft resolutions going forward to the COP.
11. In addition it may include accompanying background information in order to provide context and help inform the decision of the Standing Committee, but this accompanying background would not be amended by Contracting Parties nor would it be intended to advance to the COP as part of the draft resolution text. The rationale for the proposed draft resolution should be made explicit within the preambular paragraphs of the actual draft resolution.

12. To conform with Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure, the introduction must include a table indicating the potential impact on the Secretariat's workload and on the Convention's core or non-core budgets of each action included in the operative paragraphs. The table should describe the actions, and the costs in Swiss francs (CHF). Any recurrent costs should be made clear. The Secretariat can identify the workload potentially created and the sum required to support the action, if the submitting Party identifies the specific 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)

Text in the proposed draft resolution

13. 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. Contracting Parties are encouraged to try to keep the structure of their text simple and to maintain consistency throughout the document.
14. Preambular paragraphs should present brief background information necessary to contextualize the actions proposed for agreement by the Contracting Parties in the operative paragraphs. Not every operational paragraph needs to be justified in the preamble, just the content of the operational part in general. These paragraphs must begin with a verb in the form of a participle or an adjective (e.g. "Concerned", "Recalling", etc.); see the examples listed in Annex A.
15. Any prior Ramsar Resolutions or Recommendations to be cited should be combined into a single initial preambular paragraph that simply lists the Resolutions in chronological/numerical order and includes the Resolution title within parenthesis e.g.:

"1. Recalling Resolutions IX.4 (The Ramsar Convention and conservation, production and sustainable use of fisheries resources), IX.21 (Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands), X.13 (The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance), XII.15 (Evaluation of the management and conservation effectiveness of Ramsar Sites), and XIII.5 (Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention).

This helps streamline the text and is also neutral regarding characterization of the contents of the resolution, which can cause controversy and unnecessary extended debate among Contracting Parties.

16. When appropriate, a second paragraph can be used to reference decisions/resolutions of other Conventions – these are not recalled, they are more commonly acknowledged, noted, welcomed, etc., since they do not represent text that has been considered and adopted by Ramsar. All citations of other decisions/resolutions from other Conventions should be combined in one paragraph, indicate the convention, the number of the decision/resolution, show its title in parenthesis, and be listed chronologically.
17. A further paragraph may note information from other sources, ensuring that any references are precise and follow a similar style of referencing the document by its title in order to avoid any

present or future ambiguity (for example “Noting the 2014 Synthesis Report (SYR) of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)” rather than “the latest IPCC Assessment Report”). Similar to references to the work of other Conventions, these are likewise not recalled, but are more commonly acknowledged, noted, welcomed, etc.

18. 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”).
19. 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. Drafters should also note that entities that are not subject to the purview of the Convention, such as the International Organization Partners (IOPs), private sector and other stakeholders, can only be invited to do something – it is not appropriate to use any other verb in such instances since these entities do not answer to the COP.

Annexes

20. An annex may provide information that is necessary in order to understand what is being agreed in the resolution, e.g., budget tables, terms of reference, lists of countries, or – in some instances – best practices or other technical information – that is otherwise not appropriate or possible to reflect in prose within the resolution text itself. Use of annexes should be carefully considered and only used when necessary and reflect information that is important for ongoing reference purposes. Annexes may include links to further background information if needed.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. Any tables or figures should be titled as such and numbered consecutively, e.g. *Figure 2: Process for identifying key ecosystem services*.
24. If having tables in the annexes, please consider the layout. A good lay-out may improve the reader’s possibility to quickly get an overview and good understanding of the content as well as minimising unnecessary scrolling when reading and minimising the number of pages if printing the DR.

Here are a number of methods that may be useful to consider.

- Use laying format if there are many columns to be presented.
- Use thin margins when tables are broad.
- Don’t add a lot of extra rows to get more space into the table.
- Bullets points can be used instead of blank rows between short text parts in the columns.
- It is the length of the text, (not the length of the headline) that should give guidance on the width of the column. Instead long headlines for columns can have more than one line or be shortened with explanation close to the table.
- Use commonly used acronyms instead of long words/expressions.

- Sometimes the content on two columns can be combined to one if one of the columns have limited info only and that can be written in bold or italic to differ it from the other information in the common new column.

Annex A

Template for draft resolutions to be submitted to Standing Committee

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

THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
59th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 21 – 25 June 2021

Proposed 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

Short background/contextual information for the Standing Committee

Financial implications of implementation

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

Draft Resolution XIV.xx

[insert subject]

1. RECALLING...;[per paragraph 15 of Annex 1]

2. ACKNOWLEDGING/NOTING/WELCOMING/AWARE OF etc. ...;(delete this section if not applicable) [per paragraph 16 of Annex 1]
3. ACKNOWLEDGING/NOTING/WELCOMING/AWARE OF etc. ...;(delete this section if not applicable) [per paragraph 17 of Annex 1]
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... .
13. INVITES the International Organization Partners to...
14. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to...
15. CONFIRMS that the present Resolution supersedes [paragraph x of] Resolution XX.yy, which is retired.
or
CONFIRMS that this updated text and its annexes supersede those adopted as Resolution XX.yy, which is replaced by the present Resolution.
or
CONFIRMS that the guidance annexed to this Resolution supersedes the earlier guidance on this matter adopted as Annex x to Resolution XX.yy.