

Review of all previous Resolutions and Decisions

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to note the present document.

Introduction

1. At its 13th meeting (COP13, Dubai, 2018), 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*, which includes the following requests, in paragraphs 24 and 25:
 24. *REQUESTS the Secretariat to:*
 - a. *review all previous Resolutions and decisions, identifying those or parts of those, if any, that may no longer be valid or applicable, that contradict each other, or are otherwise inconsistent with current Ramsar practices, and at SC57 report its findings, including information on how it reached these conclusions (e.g. inter alia, that the work has been completed, superseded, is contradictory, or is incorporated elsewhere); and*
 - b. *based on its findings and Parties' feedback on its report to SC57, develop recommendations for Parties to consider at the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC58) to consider a process for: retiring outdated resolutions and decisions; establishing a practice of retiring outdated or contradictory Resolutions and decisions automatically when they are superseded by new ones; and preparing a consolidated list of resolutions and decisions, to be updated after each meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and on an as-needed basis following meetings of the Standing Committee;*
 25. *REQUESTS that the Standing Committee, at SC57, review the Secretariat's report on the validity of Resolutions and decisions and provide feedback, and consider the Secretariat's recommendations on this subject at SC58, with a view to including, in a relevant draft resolution for COP14, the retirement of outdated Resolutions and decisions and the establishment of a practice for the Convention to retire outdated Resolutions and decisions automatically when they are superseded by new ones.*
2. In accordance with Resolution XIII.4, paragraph 24.a., at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC57, Gland, 2019), the Secretariat presented document SC57 Doc.14, on *Review of all previous Resolutions and Decisions*, recommending a way forward based on three actions to be taken by the Conference of the Parties:

- repeal Resolutions and Recommendations, or parts of them, that are defunct;
 - consolidate the Resolutions and Recommendations, or parts thereof, that deal with the same subject; and
 - consider how its decisions would best be recorded in future, to ensure that, after the review process is complete, the Resolutions do not again become more difficult to understand and implement than they need to be.
3. Following discussion of that document, the Standing Committee adopted Decision SC57-19 as follows:

The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to carry out a preliminary grouping of existing Resolutions into major thematic areas, identifying possible priority areas for further action in line with the prioritization of urgent challenges under Agenda item 8, to submit intersessionally to a group comprising the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States of America and the Chair of the STRP for their consideration, along with advice on the capacity that would be needed to take the process further.

4. The Secretariat sought the views of the consultative group on the way to proceed in implementing the instructions to the Secretariat in Resolution XIII.4. These views were taken into account in the preparation of document SC58 Doc.13, which was presented at SC58 in June 2020. That document contained:
- Recommendations for a process to implement the instructions of the Conference of the Parties contained in Resolution XIII.4;
 - Annex 1, presenting a proposed categorization of Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (27 pages), as requested in Decision SC57-19; and
 - Annex 2, presenting a draft of a consolidated resolution on 'Inventories', with an explanation of the process followed (13 pages), as a pilot study, as agreed with the consultative group.
5. Following discussion at SC58, the Standing Committee adopted the following Decisions:

Decision SC58-19: The Standing Committee decided that, in consultation with the Standing Committee's consultative group on the review of Resolutions and Decisions of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat should prepare the following documents for consideration by the Committee at its 59th meeting and, if appropriate, forwarding for consideration at COP14:

- i. a draft list of all existing Resolutions that are effectively defunct and that should be removed from a list of valid Resolutions;*
- ii. draft guidance for the Parties, the chairs of committees, panels and other Convention bodies and the Secretariat, to specify how Resolutions should be drafted, adopted and recorded in future, to ensure that the soft law of the Convention remains clear, accessible and easy to use for matters with multiple prior COP Resolutions and/or Recommendations.*

Decision SC58-20: The Standing Committee requested that the Secretariat incorporate feedback received from Parties by 10 July 2020 into a revised draft consolidated resolution on "Inventories" as found in Annex 2 of SC58 Doc.13 for use as a model in preparing future draft consolidated resolutions as instructed by the Standing Committee.

Decision SC58-21: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised document (SC58 Doc.13) with the consultative group to be presented to SC58 in October

2020, giving due consideration to the feedback from Contracting Parties on the approach to implement Standing Committee Decision SC57-19, and to seek the guidance of the consultative group of interested Contracting Parties on its possible revision, in advance of SC58, as a number of smaller thematic documents. (The meeting planned for October 2020 was subsequently cancelled.)

5. In response to the Decisions of the Standing Committee at SC57 and SC58, the Secretariat has prepared the following documents for consideration at SC59:
 - SC59 Doc.13.1 *Review of all previous Resolutions and Decisions: Process for conducting the review;*
(as instructed in Decision SC58-21 and in response to Decision SC57-19) including:
 - draft guidance for preparation and adoption of draft resolutions in the future (as instructed in Decision SC58-19.ii); and
 - draft grouping (categorization) of current Resolutions and Recommendations into major thematic areas, as a basis for prioritizing the themes of Resolutions to be consolidated
(as instructed in Decision SC57-19);
 - SC59 Doc.13.2 *Draft list of Resolutions that are effectively defunct*
(as instructed in Decision SC58-19.i); and
 - SC59 Doc.13.3 *Draft consolidated resolution on "Inventories"*
(as instructed in Decision SC58-20).