

Report of the Secretariat on COP14

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this report.

Background

1. At its 57th meeting (SC57) the Standing Committee accepted by acclamation the offer of China to host the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14) in Wuhan, China.
2. The Standing Committee adopted Decision SC57-18 as follows: "The Standing Committee established the Subgroup on COP14, chaired by China and also comprising Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Costa Rica, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, to oversee the COP14 planning process and to develop ideas regarding the celebration of the Convention's 50th anniversary in 2021, seeking the support of other Contracting Parties as required."

Progress with preparation for COP14

3. Following the SC58 online meeting of 23 June 2020, the Secretariat has continued to engage with the host country to identify possible dates and discuss meeting requirements and logistics for COP14 in light of the COVID-19 situation. Progress has been made in finalizing the host country agreement.
4. During a call of the Subgroup on COP14 on 24 November 2020, the Subgroup agreed that preparations for COP14 should continue even though dates in the fourth quarter of 2021 had not yet been decided. The host country informed the Subgroup that it would not be able to host the additional two-day pre-COP meeting as requested in Decision SC58-09 noting that there would be the usual regional meetings as included within the nine-day provisional programme of the COP. Further, the host country reported that other aspects of the meeting such as a high-level segment, ceremonial events, side events and field excursions would take place as planned.
5. The Subgroup on COP14 convened again on 19 January 2021. During this call, Contracting Parties expressed concerns about the ability to meet physically in the fourth quarter of 2021, citing ongoing COVID-related uncertainties in regards to travel, and noting that many meetings have already been scheduled during the fourth quarter of 2021 and that additional time for preparation for COP14 according to the Rules of Procedure was important for Contracting Parties. Subgroup members expressed support for postponing COP14 to 2022, pending internal approvals of the host country. Comments were made by members in regards to having a

mechanism to deal with financial and budgetary issues during 2021, as approval of the Secretariat budget could not wait until 2022.

6. On 16 March 2021 the host country, in the role of Chair of the Subgroup on COP14, contacted Subgroup members via email proposing to postpone COP14 to the fourth quarter of 2022. Subgroup members endorsed this proposal with no objections expressed. The host country indicated that, based on this endorsement, it would seek internal approvals to postpone COP14 to the fourth quarter of 2022 and would then notify the Standing Committee accordingly for its endorsement.
7. Subsequently, the Secretariat worked with the Executive Team to inform the Standing Committee and support its consultations regarding meetings and timelines associated with the date of COP14, including the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee and the timeline for submission of draft resolutions.
8. On 4 June 2021 the Subgroup on COP14 convened. During this call the host country updated Contracting Parties on preparatory progress, expressing that it was the expectation of the host country that the dates of COP14 would be confirmed by the Central Government in advance of SC59. The host country further reported that the theme of the Conference, “Wetlands action for people and nature” has been confirmed by the government. Regarding activities and events during the Conference, as it will be postponed to 2022, the host country will not organize an event related to the 50th anniversary, but will proceed with planning a high-level segment, side events, field trips, an exhibition and the announcement of a south-south collaboration for wetlands conservation as previously proposed.
9. Wuhan Municipality made a presentation on its preparatory efforts and reported that it is proposing changing the venue from the Intercontinental to the Eastlake Conference Centre. With a view to COVID-19 concerns, the host country would like to reduce the number of participants to 1,000 by proposing a hybrid (online + offline) meeting similar to CBD COP15, noting that the largest conference room at the Eastlake Conference Centre can accommodate 1,000 participants with tables. The Secretariat shared that there were 1,396 participants at COP13, 930 participants at COP12 and 1,371 participants at COP11. The state of requirements, developed as part of the Memorandum of Understanding on the basis of previous experience that was shared with Parties interested in hosting the meeting, includes a plenary room with capacity for 1,500 delegates with table seating. The importance of the location of the venue in regards to the standard and proximity of accommodation for attendees and the accessibility and availability of office space for support staff and good internet connection were highlighted as essential requirements in addition to adequate capacity for plenary sessions.
10. The Subgroup discussed the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards nomination process and determined that it would be ready to submit nominations to SC59 if the Standing Committee decides to address the matter as part of the SC59 agenda.

Update on the 50th Anniversary campaign

11. Decision SC58-12 invited Standing Committee members to share ideas for an enhanced “chapeau” theme for the 50th anniversary with the Secretariat by 7 July 2020, and instructed the Secretariat in consultation with the Subgroup on COP14 to finalize the theme, taking into account ideas received. There was one suggestion received by the deadline: “Wetlands connect”. The Subgroup on COP14, through an email exchange, endorsed the thematic framework proposed by

the Secretariat “Wetlands are Important for...” given its adaptability to various interests and needs of Convention stakeholders, and requested the Secretariat to proceed in developing the 50th Anniversary campaign.

12. During the 24 November 2020 call of the Subgroup on COP14, the Secretariat provided an update on the 50th Anniversary campaign, noting that the goal of the campaign is to achieve an increased understanding among key influencers of what Wetlands “are”, and the services they perform for humankind – with the ultimate goal of improving their protection. The Secretariat showed examples of how campaign communications materials including social media tiles and social media posts illustrated the different reasons wetlands are important for various stakeholders. A proposed 50th Anniversary logo was also endorsed. Contracting Parties expressed appreciation for the creativity and adaptable approach of the campaign and the elegance of the logo, and instructed the Secretariat to proceed in further developing and planning the campaign.
13. The 50th Anniversary campaign was launched in March 2021, following World Wetlands Day. An online briefing of the campaign strategy and preview of the communications materials for Contracting Parties and interested stakeholders was held on 16 March 2021 in the three languages. In the same model used for World Wetlands Day, the assets are available for Parties’ use to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and the Convention. The campaign website ramsar50.org provides a number of communications assets and resources including the 50th Anniversary logo, brand guidelines, social media toolkit, social media tiles, fact sheets and gifs. All campaign resources are available in the three languages. Since the launch of the campaign the website has received more than 19,000 page views with more than 2,000 unique visitors. Visitors are generally young, between 18 and 34 years old. This is mainly explained by the effort made by the Secretariat to disseminate the content on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and very recently LinkedIn. The number of followers on Facebook has increased by 5% since the launch of the campaign, 3% on Twitter and 2% on Instagram.