

Briefing for new members on the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee Chairs and members

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to make use of this background document and its suggestions to help guide them in the conduct of their meetings, and to consider approving the roles and responsibilities of the SC Chair (paragraph 12).

1. The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention was established by Resolution 3.3 (Regina, 1987) to oversee Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat between ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP), within the framework set by the COP at each of its meetings.
2. The regional composition, functions, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and its members are governed by Resolution VII.1 (1999), as adjusted by Resolution XI.19 (2012). Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Standing Committee (SC), in all matters not specified in Resolution VII.1 (as adjusted by Resolution XI.19), are governed by the Rules of Procedure for the Conference of the Contracting Parties, *mutatis mutandis*.
3. Resolution XI.19 adopted revised texts that update Resolution VII.1 on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Ramsar Standing Committee and its appended list of Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties belonging to the six Ramsar regional groups, and it reaffirmed that all other terms and paragraphs of Resolution VII.1 and its annexes, apart from those amendments, continue to be appropriate for guiding the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee. Resolution XI.19 Annex 1, para. 5, also introduced the idea that “each region can decide to appoint an Alternate Member or Members *pro rata* with their appointed Members with full power to represent the region, if the representative member is unable to participate in a meeting of the Standing Committee”.
4. Annex 4 of Resolution XI.19 also adopted an indicative schedule for Standing Committee intersessional meetings both in general and specifically for the 2013-2015 triennium, as follows (a schedule that is predicated on future cycles being three calendar years, with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties in May/June of the final year of each cycle):

	General timelines, post-2012	2013-2015 triennium
1st full meeting	9 months after COP	SC46 – Feb/March 2013
2nd full meeting	21 months after COP	SC47 – Feb/March 2014
Subgroup on COP (if required)	1 year before COP	Subgroup on COP12 (if required) – May/June 2014
3rd full meeting	6 months before COP	SC48 – December 2014/January 2015
Pre-COP meeting	immediately prior to COP, at the COP venue	SC49 – May/June 2015

5. Also relevant to the work of the Standing Committee are Resolution IX.24 (2005), which established a Management Working Group reporting to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties; and Resolution X.4 (2008), which established a Transition Committee of the Management Working Group. At COP11, in Resolution XI.19, the Parties recognized that aspects of the work of those groups are also embodied in the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee itself, and it was noted that intersessional Standing Committee oversight of the Secretariat is now conducted on its behalf between meetings of the Standing Committee by its Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of Subgroup on Finance) with the Secretary General.

Functions of the Standing Committee

6. In Resolution XI.19 Annex 1, para. 19, the Parties updated the functions of the Standing Committee, which are to:
 - a) carry out, between one ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the next, such interim activity on behalf of the Conference as may be necessary, giving priority to matters on which the Conference has previously recorded its approval;
 - b) make preparations on issues, including *inter alia* Draft Resolutions and Recommendations, for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
 - c) supervise, as a representative of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, the implementation of activities by the Ramsar Secretariat, the execution of the Secretariat's budget, and the conduct of the Secretariat's programmes;
 - d) provide guidance and advice to the Ramsar Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, on the preparation of meetings, and on any other matters relating to the exercise of its functions brought to it by the Secretariat;
 - e) act as Conference Committee at meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in accordance with the Rules of Procedure;
 - f) establish subgroups as necessary to facilitate the carrying out of its functions;
 - g) promote regional and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
 - h) approve the work plan of the Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) on the basis of the decisions of the COP, receive the reports of the STRP on the progress made with its implementation, and provide guidance for its future development;
 - i) adopt for each triennium the Operational Guidelines for the Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use and decide on the allocation of funds;

- j) review each triennium the criteria for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award established by Resolution VI.18 and select the laureates prior to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and
- k) report to the Conference of the Contracting Parties on the activities it has carried out between ordinary meetings of the Conference.

Decision-taking by the Standing Committee appointed members

7. Resolution VII.1, paras. 6 and 7, makes it clear that the “voting members” of the Standing Committee are the regional representative members appointed at the most recent meeting of the COP as well as the host countries of the most recent and next meetings of the COP.
8. Thus, unlike a meeting of the COP itself, at which all Contracting Parties are voting members of the meeting, only the Standing Committee members set out in Resolution VII.1 are empowered by the COP to take decisions at Standing Committee meetings. Traditionally, Standing Committee decisions are made whenever possible by consensus, but if a vote should be needed, the COP Rules of Procedure concerning voting come into play for those Standing Committee voting members.
9. In recent years, an increasing number of Contracting Parties have been welcomed at Standing Committee meetings as observers. At the discretion of the SC Chair, such observer Parties and other observer organizations contribute to the richness of the discussions during Standing Committee agenda items. Under the Rules of Procedure, however, observer Parties are not in a position to vote, if a vote should be necessary, or to block any decision that needs to be taken by the Standing Committee itself.
10. Subgroups of the Standing Committee are likewise composed of Standing Committee members who are preparing advice on various matters for the full Standing Committee, but those subgroups will normally also welcome observer Parties and organizations, who may express their views freely but may not vote or block consensus.

Roles and responsibilities of the Chair and appointed members of the Standing Committee

11. At the request of the Chair of the Standing Committee for the last triennium, the Secretariat prepared a note on the role of the SC Chair which was provided to the 40th meeting of the Committee (in DOC. SC40-4). This is reproduced below, and the Standing Committee may wish to review and approve these roles and responsibilities for the conduct of its 2013-2015 business.

Chair of Standing Committee

12. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee performs the following role and responsibilities:

Standing Committee and other meetings

- Chair meetings of Standing Committee;

- Chair meetings of the Management Working Group and of the Transition Committee of the Management Working Group (ref. Resolution X.4);
- Chair the STRP Oversight Committee (ref. Resolutions IX.11 and X.9);
- Participate as far as possible in STRP meetings in order to be aware of and advise on any important issues in relation to reporting to the Standing Committee;
- Oversee the preparation of agenda and documents for SC meetings;
- Maintain oversight of the activities and functioning of all Standing Committee Subgroups;
- Represent the Convention at key meetings where a high level presence is necessary, in consultation with the Secretary General.

Conference of the Parties (COP)

- Chair the Conference Committee during meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
- Report to the COP on Standing Committee activities between ordinary COP meetings.

Policy

- Between meetings of the Standing Committee, maintain liaison with the Vice-Chair, Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, and Secretary General on developing and urgent issues.

Finances

- Endeavor to receive from the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance information and advice on Convention state of finances;
- Approve travel for the Secretary General.

Personnel

- With the Chair of the Subgroup on Finance and the Vice-Chair of the SC, review the terms of reference of any new posts to be established by the Secretariat before advertisement;
- Advise on the recruitment of professional positions;
- With the Vice-Chair and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance, carry out the performance appraisal process for the SG.

In carrying out these tasks, the Chair of the Standing Committee should expect:

- To be briefed regularly by the Secretary General on issues of upcoming importance;
- To be briefed fully on all aspects of upcoming Standing Committee, SC Subgroup, and STRP meetings;
- To receive full support from the Secretariat during SC and other meetings;
- To receive technical support from the Secretariat for documents and presentational materials for external meetings;
- To be kept informed by the Secretary General or the Human Resources liaison person at the Secretariat of new professional staff recruitments, especially during the process of appointment to newly-created positions, and to receive a short note detailing the selection procedure and the candidate selected;
- To be briefed by the Deputy Secretary General on issues regarding the STRP Oversight Committee and the STRP.

Tasks of Contracting Parties elected as Regional Representatives in the Standing Committee (from Resolution XI.19, Annex 3)

13. The Contracting Parties that have accepted to be elected as Regional Representatives on the Standing Committee have the following tasks:
 - To designate their delegates to the Standing Committee taking into account their significant responsibilities as Regional Representatives . . . and to make every effort that their delegates or their substitutes attend all meetings of the Committee;
 - When there is more than one Regional Representative in a regional group, to maintain regular contacts and consultations with the other Regional Representative(s);
 - To maintain regular contacts and consultations with the Contracting Parties in their regional group, and to use the opportunities of travel within their regions and of attending regional or international meetings to consult about issues related to the Convention and to promote its objectives. To this effect, when there is more than one Regional Representative, they will agree among themselves which Contracting Parties will be the responsibility of each Regional Representative;
 - To canvass the opinions of the Contracting Parties in their regional group before meetings of the Standing Committee;
 - To advise the Secretariat in setting the agenda of regional meetings;
 - To assume additional responsibilities by serving as members of the subgroups established by the Standing Committee;
 - To provide advice as requested by the Chairperson and/or the chairs of subgroups and/or the Secretariat of the Convention;

- In the regions concerned, to make deliberate efforts to encourage other countries to join the Convention;
14. Following consultations in accordance with paragraph 13's 3rd bullet point above, Standing Committee members' responsibilities for regular contacts and consultations with other Contracting Parties have been agreed as follows:

Africa: Burundi, Guinea, South Africa, and Tunisia (Alternate members: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Namibia)

Burundi represents: Djibouti, Kenya (Alternate), Rwanda, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania

Guinea represents: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali (Alternate), Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo

South Africa represents: Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia (Alternate), Seychelles, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Tunisia represents: Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (Alternate), Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sudan

Asia: Cambodia, Republic of Korea, and the United Arab Emirates (Alternate members: Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal)

Cambodia represents: South and Southeast Asia

Republic of Korea represents: East Asia

United Arab Emirates represents: Central and West Asia

Europe: Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, and Romania (Alternate member: Czech Republic)

Croatia represents: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and The Former Republic of Macedonia

Denmark represents: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic (Alternate), Georgia, Ireland, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, and Ukraine

Finland represents: Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, and United Kingdom

France represents: Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey

Romania (SC Chair and COP11 Host)

Switzerland (Permanent Observer in all meetings)

Neotropics: Chile, Cuba, and Guatemala (Alternate members: Argentina, Costa Rica, Jamaica)

Chile represents: Argentina (Alternate), Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela

Cuba represents: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica (Alternate), Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago

Guatemala represents: Costa Rica (Alternate), El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama

North America: Canada (Alternate member: Mexico)

Canada represents: Mexico (Alternate) and the United States of America

Oceania: Fiji (Alternate member: Palau)

Fiji represents: Australia, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau (Alternate), Papua New Guinea, and Samoa