

Report and Decisions of the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee at its intersessional virtual sessions of 23 and 25 June 2020

Tuesday 23 June

13:00 – 16:00 Plenary virtual intersessional session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 1: Opening statements

1. The **Chair of the Standing Committee** (United Arab Emirates) opened the meeting.
2. The **Secretary General** of the Convention welcomed participants and thanked them for their engagement in the intersessional process to date.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

Decision SC58-01: The Standing Committee adopted the provisional agenda.

Agenda item 3: Brief on the Standing Committee intersessional process
and

Agenda item 4: Standing Committee participation

3. The **Secretariat** summarised the process to date, since the decision by the Standing Committee to postpone the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee to October 2020. Contracting Parties identified time-sensitive issues requiring decisions before October; some of these to be addressed through an email-based consultation process, and others in meetings of working groups of the Standing Committee, namely the Management Working Group (see the report at Annex 1), the Subgroup on COP14, the Subgroup on Finance (see the report at Annex 2) and the Executive Team (see the report at Annex 3).
4. The **Chair of the Standing Committee** noted that meeting reports and draft decision text had been shared with Contracting Parties on the understanding that, if no comments were made to decision text by the deadline provided in advance of the meeting, decisions would be considered approved and adopted.
5. The **Secretariat** noted that the meeting was a closed meeting and that the report would include a list of participants.

Agenda item 5: Report of the Management Working Group

6. The Management Working Group had met on 10 June 2020 to consider SC58 Agenda item 19 *Report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel*, and its report had been sent

on 19 June to Standing Committee members and Contracting Parties registered as observers for comment.

7. The **Secretary General** noted that one specific suggestion had been received, that the STRP should consider including a section in the special edition of the *Global Wetland Outlook*, in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the link between pandemics and biodiversity loss, specifically regarding wetlands, and highlighting the importance for countries to develop an environmental recovery plan in parallel with economic recovery plans in the aftermath of the pandemic, in order to showcase the Convention's relevance on the global stage on a par with other multilateral environmental agreements.

Decision SC58-02: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Management Working Group.

Decision SC58-03: The Standing Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, which contains the STRP's progress, and requested that it continue to focus on its highest-priority tasks and the ad-hoc advisory task on Criterion 6 regarding use of population estimates.

Decision SC58-04: The Standing Committee requested that the STRP continue to develop the *Global Wetland Outlook* (special edition) anticipating that a 50th anniversary theme will be selected shortly by the Standing Committee and the *Global Wetlands Outlook* (special edition) can be adapted to align with the selected theme.

Decision SC58-05: The Standing Committee recommended that the STRP continue to work on wetlands and blue carbon (task 5.1), in accordance with the terms of Resolution XIII.14, sub-paragraph 15 a), and scope the work for sub-paragraphs b), c) and d) for the next triennium, and took note of the importance of sharing the findings with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity via appropriate means, e.g., through a side event on the margins of their respective COPs.

Decision SC58-06: The Standing Committee recommended further that the STRP submit to the Standing Committee a proposal to update Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Criteria regarding the use of population estimates, for the Committee to consider for submission to the Conference of Contracting Parties, taking into account the need for Contracting Parties to have updated and dynamic information.

Decision SC58-07: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to include a meeting of the Management Working Group in the work programme of the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee, and requested that the Chair of the STRP submit a report on the latest progress in fulfilling its mandate for the Group to consider at that meeting.

Agenda item 7: Report of the Executive Team on SC58 Agenda item 20.4 *Process for the preparation and review of draft resolutions* (purpose and timing of regional pre-COP meetings)

8. The Executive Team had met on 17 June 2020 and had recommended that an additional two days be set aside before COP14 to allow for regional meetings to be held, it being proposed that these replace the meetings that had hitherto taken place within the respective regions. The Executive Team had reviewed the implications and challenges of the delay of SC58 on the timeline of meetings before COP14 and in particular the role and feasibility, including financial, of regional pre-COP meetings. The Executive Team had discussed the challenges for

the Secretariat to organise seven meetings (an STRP meeting, five regional pre-COP meetings and one Standing Committee meeting) in 2021 before COP14 (plus COP14 in the same year) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic with associated challenges for travelling and the crowded schedule of meetings. It further noted that the regional pre-COP meetings are not mandated by any Resolution nor referenced in the Rules of Procedure. It further stressed the challenge of seeking financial support for these meetings.

9. In discussion several Contracting Parties expressed the importance of regional meetings in allowing adequate discussion of the proposed agenda for the forthcoming COP. Others recommended virtual meetings further ahead of COP14 as a productive way forward.
10. The **host country for COP14 (China)** noted that provision of an extra two days of meetings had not originally been foreseen and that consultation within the host government would need to take place before a definitive commitment could be made.
11. Interventions were made by **Armenia, China, Costa Rica, Mexico, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America and Uruguay.**

Decision SC58-08: The Standing Committee took note of the report of the Executive Team.

Decision SC58-09: The Standing Committee agreed that two days of regional pre-COP meetings should if possible take place immediately before COP14, at the same location as COP14, and instructed the Secretariat to discuss with the host country the necessary arrangements for two days of pre-COP meetings to take place immediately before COP14.

Decision SC58-10: The Standing Committee agreed that regions should hold virtual meetings in advance of COP14, and instructed the Secretariat to facilitate their preparation and implementation with the support and advice of the Contracting Party regional representative members of the Standing Committee.

Agenda item 6: Report of the Subgroup on COP14
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12. The **host country for COP14** provided an oral update of preparations so far, noting that the Subgroup had discussed provisional timing and venue along with provisional themes for COP14 and for the 50th anniversary of the Convention, which would also take place in 2021. Various proposals to celebrate the anniversary at the COP were under consideration, including *inter alia* an exhibition, a high-level segment and dinner, a non-binding statement, and the establishment of a wetland memorial park. A COP14-specific theme of “Wetlands action for people and nature” had been proposed for clearance by the host government. The Subgroup had discussed means to ensure a sustainable event and had expressed a desire that it be carbon-neutral.
13. The Secretariat reported that, regarding the overarching themes proposed for the Convention’s 50th anniversary, two had been selected for further discussion: “Wetlands are important” and “Wetland solutions”. It was explained that these had been the result of discussions with a professional communications expert and market research regarding the wider understanding of wetland issues. They were not intended as slogans but rather as chapeaux that could be adapted and applied in a variety of contexts and allow for a range of individuals, organizations and countries to tailor the campaign to their interests. It was also noted that language conducive to simple hashtags was important, as it was believed that much of their impact would be through social media.

14. In discussion several Contracting Parties noted that the themes did not seem particularly resonant or “catchy”, which they believed might detract from their impact, although others were content with the alternatives given, and suggested relying on the advice of communications experts.
15. Interventions were made by **China, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.**

Decision SC58-11: The Standing Committee took note of the oral report of the Subgroup on COP14.

Decision SC58-12: The Standing Committee agreed 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 finalise the theme, taking into account ideas received.

Agenda item 8: SC58 Agenda item 8.2 *Report on financial matters for 2019 and 2020* and SC58 Agenda item 8.3 *Status of annual contributions*

16. The **Chair of the Subgroup on Finance (Mexico)** noted that the Subgroup had met on 15 June 2020 and that its report had been circulated to all meeting participants. Agreement had been reached on all matters except two: action item vi) on the allocation for Ramsar Regional Initiatives; and action item vii) on the allocation for the Review of Resolutions.
17. Following some discussion it was decided that the Report of the Subgroup on Finance could be adopted with the exception of these two matters, which would be further considered after the relevant agenda items had been addressed by the Standing Committee in these sessions.
18. Interventions were made by **Costa Rica, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.**

Decision SC58-13: The Standing Committee approved the report of the Subgroup on Finance except items 1.2 and 1.3, which would be considered subsequently to the relevant agenda items by the Standing Committee.

Decision SC58-14: The Standing Committee:

- accepted the 2019 audited financial statements as of 31 December 2019;
- took note of the core budget results for 2019;
- took note of the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2019; and
- took note of the reallocation of the 2019 budget as described in paragraph 14 of document SC58 Doc.8.2.

Decision SC58-15: The Standing Committee:

- took note of the status of annual contributions;
- took note of the actions listed in paragraphs 15, 17 and 18 of document SC58 Doc.8.3 to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions;
- instructed the Secretariat to continue to publish the status of each Party’s contribution on the Convention’s website and invited the Parties with outstanding contributions to agree on a payment plan in discussion with the Secretariat; and

- instructed the Secretariat to work with Parties which have been able to pay outstanding contributions, particularly long-standing ones, to identify good practices and efforts that could be shared.

Decision SC58-16: The Standing Committee took note of:

- the change in annual contributions receivable and in the annual provision against contributions receivable;
- the status of the African voluntary contributions; and
- the decision on allocation of funds to Ramsar Regional Initiatives in Africa by the African Regional Representatives as follows: CHF 30,333 each for RamCEA, WACoWet and NigerWet.

Decision SC58-17: The Standing Committee took note of the progress in implementing the recommendations of the IUCN Financial Management Review of Non-core (Restricted) Fund Accounts, and approved the proposal on the use of management fees, as described in paragraph 43 of document SC58 Doc.8.2.

Decision SC58-18: The Standing Committee considered the external auditor's proposal on group confirmation of outstanding Contracting Party balances in response to Decision SC57-40, and approved the proposed way forward in paragraphs 50 and 51 of document SC58 Doc.8.2.

Agenda item 9: Revision of decisions on agenda items discussed by email

- SC58 Agenda item 13 - *Review of all previous Resolutions and decisions*
19. The **Deputy Secretary General** outlined the process thus far. Comments from Contracting Parties had been received and distributed to meeting participants. Those who participated in the discussion recognised the value of the work already undertaken and thought it important that such work continue. It was stressed that it had never been the intention for a complete review to be completed by COP14; rather what was needed was clear guidance as to how to proceed.
 20. Interventions were made by **Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.**

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. a draft resolution 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 for 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.

- SC Agenda item 16 – *Work plan of the Secretariat for 2020*
21. The **Secretary General** noted the comments and questions that had been received on items in the draft work plan for 2020. These regarded the request by the Independent Advisory Committee of the Wetland City Accreditation for 30 days of Secretariat support, a requested change regarding support to the CEPA Oversight Panel and a question regarding the Ramsar Awards. Two Parties had also asked whether the pandemic situation necessitated a review of the workplan and deadlines within it. Regarding the implications of the Secretariat inputs to the Wetland City Accreditation, she stressed the need to get clear guidance from Parties, and mentioned that the actions requested are seen to support implementation of Resolution XII.10. The Secretariat checked that proposals were sent by National Focal Points before forwarding them to the IAC. For the accreditation ceremony, the Secretariat had to prepare and present the certificates and at COP13 it was involved in liaising with IAC, which led the ceremony, to ensure coordination with the overall event and to welcome the Majors of cities accredited. The Secretariat was also part of the IAC as per the approved terms of reference and it had sought clarification earlier on regarding its role, with the Standing Committee instructing that it was symbolic. She explained that the 30 days was an estimate from IAC. In the view of the Secretariat, there was no need to remove tasks from its proposed workplan.
 22. Participants agreed to consider further whether the Secretariat should amend the plan as necessary, or carry out a fuller review of timelines taking into account the impact of the pandemic, once SC58 Agenda item 23 (Report of the Co-chairs of the Independent Committee on Wetland City Accreditation) had been addressed.
 23. Interventions were made by **Japan** and **the United States of America**.
 - SC58 Agenda item 20.3 - *The Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards*
 24. The Secretariat noted that future sponsorship from Danone for the Wetlands Conservation Awards was under discussion and had not yet been finalised for the 2021 Awards.
 25. During discussion a number of issues were identified for further consideration by the Standing Committee: the possibility of introducing a new fourth award category on community participation; whether nomination criterion 5 concerning eligibility should be included, given that the Convention has no remit to reject nominees engaged in legal proceedings; whether to proceed with the nomination process before funding is secured; the possibility of eliminating the cash prizes if funding is not secured; and whether to review the timeline for the process taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic.
 26. Interventions were made by **Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Sweden** and **the United Arab Emirates**.
 27. It was agreed to continue discussions at the following session on Thursday 25 June. The session was adjourned at 16:00.

Thursday 25 June

13:00 – 16:00 Plenary virtual intersessional session of the Standing Committee

Agenda item 9: Revision of decisions on agenda items discussed by email

- SC58 Agenda item 20.3 - *The Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards* (continued)
28. The Secretariat recalled that discussions on sponsorship from Danone for the 2021 Wetlands Conservation Awards had not yet been finalised.
29. It was recalled that the possibility of introducing a new award category on community participation had been raised in the discussion during the previous session, as well as an objection to removing criterion 5 concerning eligibility. Participants had also considered whether to proceed with the nomination process before funding is secured, the possibility of eliminating the cash prizes and the timeline for the process taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic.
30. The Secretariat noted that two possible draft Standing Committee decisions had been circulated: option 1 being to approve the proposed procedures for the COP14 Awards and to request that the Secretariat prepare a draft resolution for COP14, updating and replacing Resolution VI.18; and option 2 being to request the Secretariat to review the proposed procedures according to the comments received, and submit them again for approval at SC58. Comments had been received from four Contracting Parties. These had been incorporated and the document distributed to participants before the meeting. Of the two options presented the Secretariat recommended option 2, noting that this would leave adequate time for incorporation of consideration of a possible new award category, for preparation of a new draft resolution if agreed to at SC58 and for nominations to be reviewed by the Subgroup on COP14 with the aim of making final recommendations at SC59.
31. In ensuing discussion, general support was expressed for option 2. It was noted that eligibility criterion 5 should be retained in square brackets as its deletion might have implications that would pose a reputational risk to the Convention.
32. Interventions were made by **Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.**

Decision SC58-22: The Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to review the proposed procedures for the COP14 Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Awards contained in document SC58 Doc.20.3, according to the comments received from Contracting Parties, to be submitted for approval for the SC58 in October.

- SC58 Agenda item 22.2 - *Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives* (clarification on the call for proposals for new RRIIs)
33. The Secretariat indicated that this was a request for clarification regarding paragraph 13 of Resolution XIII.9, which instructed the Secretariat to open the call for proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives but provided no guidance as to when this should be done. The Secretariat believed that the process would need to be completed by SC59 so that proposals would be ready for adoption by COP14; it had therefore proposed a date of 31 July 2020.

34. One question was raised regarding the closing date for nominations, it being emphasised that adequate time would be needed for review of nominations before SC59. In response, the Secretariat noted that the date for SC59 had not yet been agreed, but on the assumption that it would be sometime in April or May 2021, and given that documents would need to be distributed three months before this, it would be expected that the deadline for nominations would be in October or November 2020.
35. An intervention was made by **Australia**.

Decision SC58-23: The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to open the call for proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives no later than 31 July 2020 in line with paragraph 13 of Resolution XIII. 9 and requested that the Secretariat choose a deadline for suggested future RRIIs so that propositions can be handled well in time for SC59 to consider them and submit suitable suggestions for consideration at COP14.

- SC58 Agenda item 23 - *Report of the Co-chairs of the Independent Advisory Committee on Wetland City Accreditation*
36. The Secretariat noted that it was looking for guidance on the implementation of Resolution XII.10, in the light of the request in the report of the Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) in its report to SC58 (document SC58 Doc.23) to endorse the allocation of 30 days of Secretariat time to provide administrative services. The actions requested to support implementation of Resolution XII.10 included receiving applications, checking their endorsement and forwarding to the IAC, replying to any queries; preparing accreditation certificates, publishing of a web article and development of a web page for the accredited cities; and the communication, preparation and holding of the accreditation ceremony. The Secretariat advised that some of these tasks were likely to be outside the remit of an administrative assistant. The Secretariat noted that the intention to present a new draft resolution on Wetland City Accreditation for consideration at COP14 might be an opportunity to resolve outstanding issues regarding financing.
37. In the ensuing discussion some Contracting Parties noted that Resolution XII.10 states that core funding is not to be used in its implementation, and emphasised the importance of adhering closely to the existing Resolution, and not set a precedent of going against a COP Resolution at a Standing Committee, and noted the reality that core resources could become severely constrained, due to the pandemic. They proposed that the language of the decision align more closely with the Resolution, and that the time required of the Secretariat be accordingly reviewed. They observed that a number of the identified tasks, for example organising an award ceremony, should be the responsibility of the Independent Advisory Committee. One Party suggested that the aid of the Secretariat was needed to include the Wetland City Accreditation ceremony into the COP timetable.
38. Other Parties, while recognising the need to exercise budgetary caution among other issues, stressed the very high value of the Accreditation as a tool for raising the profile of the Convention, and noted that it should be prominent in future communications plans for discussion at the next COP.
39. Interventions were made by **Japan, Switzerland, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America**.

Decision SC58-24: The Standing Committee approved, subject to the availability of resources in compliance with Resolution XII.10 and the approval of the Subgroup on Finance, the allocation of the number of days of administrative assistant time needed during the current triennium to provide the following administrative services for the Wetland City Accreditation scheme;

- publishing of the call for applications;
- receiving applications, and forwarding eligible applications to the IAC;
- preparation of accreditation certificates, and development of a web page and its content for the accredited cities.

It further requested the Secretariat to provide the estimated number of days required in due course.

- *Elements of advice for the GEF concerning the funding to support the objectives and priorities of the Convention, for the eighth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund.*

40. The Secretariat noted that draft decision text had been circulated to the Standing Committee, comments had been received from four Contracting Parties, and an amended version recirculated. Agreement had been reached on all matters apart from proposed operative sub-paragraph iv) of the proposed text.

41. In the ensuing discussion it was pointed out regarding sub-paragraph iv) that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the intended recipient of the decision, did not have a mandate to address climate change issues and would be unable to make use of it. It was also pointed out that the proposed sub-paragraph vi) dealt with similar subject matter. Amendments were proposed to sub-paragraph vi) to incorporate relevant elements of sub-paragraph iv), which received general support.

42. Interventions were made by **Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.**

Decision SC58-25: The Standing Committee decided to request that the following elements of advice be submitted by the Secretariat to the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

The Convention on Wetlands appreciates the invitation of the Convention on Biological Diversity to the governing bodies of the various biodiversity-related conventions to provide their input to help develop strategic guidance for the eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund.

In response the Ramsar Convention would like to draw the attention of the Convention on Biological Diversity to the following considerations:

- a. **Wetlands are the most threatened of all ecosystems with 87% of the planet's wetlands having been lost, 35% of which between 1970-2015 at a rate three times faster than forests; and 81% of the populations of freshwater species have declined globally, that is a higher percentage than for other species;**
- b. **Wetlands provide significant benefits and services to people, including most freshwater for consumption, protection from floods, droughts and other disasters, food and livelihoods for millions of people, and more effective storage of carbon than any other ecosystem.**

- c. The Convention on Wetlands is highly relevant to the post-2020 biodiversity framework, especially with respect to the achievement of no net loss in the area and integrity of freshwater and marine and coastal ecosystems as well as other goals and targets;

In light of these considerations the Convention on Wetlands invites the CBD to include in its COP-15 guidance to the Financial Mechanism:

- i. An invitation to continue to support projects in the Biodiversity Focal Area that mainstream wetlands and its biodiversity across sectors, landscapes – including inland waters – and seascapes; to address direct drivers to protect wetland habitats and species, including through protected areas systems such as the Wetlands of International Importance designated by Contracting Parties under the Convention on Wetlands; and to further develop biodiversity policy and institutional frameworks, including policy making and review, monitoring, spatial planning, incentives, and strategic establishment of protected areas, and protected areas management and restoration.
- ii. An invitation to the GEF to continue to address the drivers that cause the loss of habitat and species and include under the current priority cluster on addressing direct drivers to protect habitats and species a programme priority to “Reduce pressures on freshwater ecosystems” besides the current one on “Reduce pressure on coral reefs and other vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems”. This would reflect the level of threat and the multiple benefits derived from wetlands, including freshwater wetlands that are not currently covered in the International Waters portfolio, such as peatlands existing in national territories.
- iii. An invitation to the GEF to enhance support towards the integration of wetlands in the revision or updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and other national development plans, national budgets and priorities;
- iv. An invitation to the GEF under the International Waters Focal Area, to continue the support to projects and activities to sustain healthy coastal and marine ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and to enhance regional and national cooperation on shared freshwater surface and groundwater basins;
- v. An invitation to the GEF to continue to undertake further projects on Multifocal Areas Programmes on wetlands, which address the critical importance of wetlands for the multiple benefits these ecosystems deliver to nature and people, and cost effectiveness of investments that achieve biodiversity, water, climate and livelihoods objectives, while addressing systematic inclusion of gender equality, which Parties to the Convention are mainstreaming in accordance with Resolution XIII.18;
- vi. An invitation to the GEF to include contributions to the biodiversity-related Conventions as part of the Focal Areas of the four-year outcome-oriented framework of programme priorities for the eighth replenishment period (July 2022 to June 2026).

The Convention on Wetlands appreciates the support of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in advocating for these areas of shared interest and mutual benefit to our respective Parties and to the environment.

- SC58 Agenda item 16 - *Work plan of the Secretariat for 2020* (continued)

43. The **Secretary General** noted that comments had been received on the workplan (as summarised during the previous session, see paragraph 21 above). In view of these, two draft decisions had been proposed for the Standing Committee's consideration, one approving the existing plan and the other asking the Secretariat to review the plan, particularly considering deadlines in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be submitted for approval in October at SC58.
44. During discussion, participants mentioned the need to ensure support to CEPA and work on Blue Carbon, Sustainable Development Goals, Nationally Determined Contributions and the global coastal forum, which are subject to available resources, and expressed support for the first of these options.
45. Interventions were made by **Costa Rica, Sweden and Uganda**.

Decision SC58-26: The Standing Committee decided to approve the integrated Secretariat Annual Plan for 2020 as part of the Triennial Plan for 2019-2021 approved by SC57-21.

Agenda item 8: SC58 Agenda item 8.2 *Report on financial matters for 2019 and 2020* and SC58 Agenda item 8.3 *Status of annual contributions*

46. It was noted that agreement had been reached at the previous session on all matters included in the Report of the Subgroup on Finance except for two: action item vi) allocation for Ramsar Regional Initiatives; and action item vii) allocation for the Review of Resolutions. The Committee therefore now addressed these in order to be able to approve the core budget for 2020.
- Regarding point 1.3 of the Report of the Subgroup on Review of Resolutions:
47. In reviewing the funds needed to continue productively with this workstream as approved on the session of 23 June, the Secretariat indicated that of the CHF 20K allocated at SC57, CHF 4K had been spent as of April 2020 and a further CHF 2K after that date. The Secretariat proposed that an additional allocation of CHF 6K would be enough to continue the work.
48. Participants supported the allocation of this funding to continuing work on the Review of Resolutions.
49. Interventions were made by **Australia, Costa Rica, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America**.

Decision SC58-27: The Standing Committee approved the allocation of CHF 6,000 from savings from the 2019 carry-forward in legal services in the core budget for the review of Resolutions, for a total of CHF 26,000 when combined with previously allocated funding. This allocation would be moved to the budget line "Resolutions review" under "Standing Committee Services".

- Regarding point 1.2 of the Report of the Subgroup on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives:
50. During discussion, several participants underscored the importance they attached to Ramsar Regional Initiatives and emphasised the problems they experienced in implementing relevant activities under the present crisis. They were concerned that it might prove impossible to use

up budget allocations during the current period and that these might then be lost. Others stressed the need for caution in the current circumstances, the existence of unspent balances from the prior years and the need to ensure that allocated funds were used for eligible activities. However, they agreed that the Standing Committee could consider additional requests for core budget funding at the Standing Committee meeting in October, after a review of the circumstances.

51. Interventions were made by **Colombia, Costa Rica, Japan, Mexico, Senegal, the United States of America, and Uruguay.**

Decision SC58-28: The Standing Committee approved the allocation of CHF 15,000 from an original proposal of CHF 25,000 to each of the four eligible Ramsar Regional Initiatives for their activities in 2020 from the core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives”, taking into account carry-overs from 2019 and the pandemic situation that is likely to lead to restrained activities during the remainder of 2020, and noted the openness of Subgroup on Finance members to the eligible RRI requesting an additional CHF 10,000 during their October meeting.

Decision SC58-29: The Standing Committee took note of the recommendation of the Subgroup on Finance to pay special attention to the implementation of Decision SC57-11 and to the progress of the working group on Ramsar Regional Initiatives and the tasks entrusted through Resolution XIII.9, which include actions to improve transparency through new operational guidelines. It further considered the following actions to enhance the decision-making and oversight ability of the Subgroup of Finance on matters related to RRIs:

- 1. Enhance the reporting requirements to improve their accountability, and good practices on financial management, as part of the Standing Committee’s consideration of agenda item 22.2 at SC58; and**
- 2. Undertake a study of RRIs to better understand their impact, progress and effectiveness in assisting Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Convention, taking into account the report on the legal status of RRIs and the review of RRI Resolutions and Decisions to be considered by SC58 in agenda items 22.3 and 22.4 respectively, to avoid duplication.**

- Regarding point 1.1 of the Report of the Subgroup on the core budget for 2020:

52. The Standing Committee having approved the two items in the report of the Finance Subgroup remaining for consideration from the previous session, there were no further comments on the report’s recommendations for decisions.

Decision SC58-30: The Standing Committee approved the adjusted budget for 2020 attached in Annex 4 of the present report. The Subgroup will monitor implementation of the budget and adjust as needed.

Decision SC58-31: The Standing Committee requested the creation of two separate budget lines in future budgets for: 1) provisions for outstanding contributions; and 2) staff-related provisions.

Agenda item 10: Adoption of the report of the meeting

53. The report of the meeting of 23 June was approved with minor amendments to paragraph 7 and Decision SC58-19, and on the understanding that paragraphs 21 to 27, which addressed items not yet closed on the agenda, be resubmitted along with the draft report of the current session.

54. During discussion a Party asked that meeting reports – as in the past – include more detail on substantive issues, particularly where new ideas or themes were introduced by the Secretariat and others.
55. Interventions were made by **Japan, Switzerland** and **the United States of America**.

Agenda item 11: Any other business

56. No items were raised.

Agenda item 12: Closing remarks

57. In closing the meeting, the **Chair** thanked all those who had participated under unusual circumstances. The **Secretary General** thanked the Chair, Parties, interpreters and staff.

The session was closed at 16:00.

Annex 1

Report and recommendations of the meeting of the Management Working Group, 10 June 2020

Participants

Management Working Group Members

- Australia
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Mexico
- Senegal
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Arab Emirates
- United States of America
- Uruguay

Non-Contracting Party Members

- STRP Chair
- Former STRP Chair
- IOP representative (WWT)

Contracting Party Observers

- Brazil
- Myanmar
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- United Kingdom

Secretariat

- Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General
- Jay Aldous, Deputy Secretary General
- Marcela Bonells, Science and Policy Officer
- Delphine Bremond, Executive Assistant to the Secretary General
- Manuel Kern, IT Officer
- Edmund Jennings, Documentation Officer

Summary

The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) provided a summary of his report (document SC58 Doc.19) and updated the Management Working Group on specific items. Additional information was provided in response to queries by the MWG.

Highest priority tasks

Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) – special edition: Work is continuing on the draft through the STRP task working group in anticipation of a decision on the theme for the 50th anniversary of the Convention, with the intention that specific linkages to the 50th anniversary theme can later be

added to retrofit the text within the document to the theme chosen, following the Standing Committee's decision on this matter.

Wetlands and sustainable agriculture (task 1.2): A consultant has been engaged and good progress is being made on the task. A Contracting Party noted the particular need within this task to develop guidance for national and regional application by Contracting Parties and Ramsar Regional Initiatives.

Peatland rewetting/restoration (task 2.2): A consultant has been engaged to draft a technical manual and practical guidance document. The STRP will draft a policy brief. Work is progressing with the draft technical manual.

Wetlands and blue carbon (task 5.1): Work is progressing on the desktop study on blue carbon wetlands and the consultant's comprehensive report is being finalized. As part of this study the group has been compiling data on blue carbon stocks on an Excel file for internal use.

The Secretariat will send a notification to Contracting Parties requesting expressions of interest in having their data included in the desktop study, and surveying them on issues of managing blue carbon resources, as well as requesting data on spatial extent.

The importance of applying and presenting the findings from this task as soon as possible to UNFCCC COP in Glasgow and to feed into the CBD post 2020 biodiversity processes, most likely during a side event, was stressed.

Medium and lower priority tasks

Task 4.1, Develop guidance on integrating gender issues in the implementation of the Convention: In light of the Panel's limited capacity and expertise on the subject matter, the MWG instructed the Panel to focus on its highest priority tasks, requesting the Secretariat to move work forward on this task outside of the purview of the STRP instead. The Secretariat is currently identifying a consultant with relevant experience to develop guidance including specific examples. The Group thanked Finland for providing funding for this important task and appreciated the Secretariat's effort to advance this work through this more appropriate channel.

Ad-hoc advisory tasks and other requests

Criterion 6 – use of population estimates: The former Chair of the STRP provided preliminary comments to the Secretariat and a draft document has been developed. A working group of core STRP members has been established to deliver on this task. It will provide inputs including sources of updated population estimates and the draft will be circulated to the full Panel for consultation. The STRP will subsequently submit recommendations to the Standing Committee on Criterion 6 for its decision to be considered at COP14.

The importance of the task was noted, as current population estimates are needed to identify appropriate wetlands for protection and to ensure the highest standards are identified and maintained for Ramsar-designated sites. A more agile process to enable the application of further updated estimates from a range of sources would be valuable.

Recommendations of the Management Working Group – Draft decisions for Standing Committee

The Management Working Group recommends the following decision text for the Standing Committee:

The Standing Committee:

- notes with appreciation the report of the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, which contains the STRP's progress, and requests that it continue to focus on its highest priority tasks and the ad-hoc advisory task on Criterion 6 – use of population estimates.
- requests that the STRP continue to develop the Global Wetland Outlook (special edition) anticipating that a 50th anniversary theme will be selected shortly by the Standing Committee and the Global Wetlands Outlook (special edition) can be adapted to align with the selected theme.
- recommends that the STRP continue to work on Wetlands and blue carbon (task 5.1), in accordance with the terms of Resolution XIII.14, sub-paragraphs 15 a) and scoping the work for sub-paragraphs b), c) and d) for the next triennium, and takes note of the importance of sharing the findings with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity via appropriate means, e.g., through a side event on the margins of their respective COPs.
- recommends further that the STRP submit to the Standing Committee a proposal to update Criterion 6 of the Ramsar Criteria regarding the use of population estimates, for the Committee to consider for submission to the Conference of Contracting Parties, taking into account the need for Contracting Parties to have updated and dynamic information.
- requests the Secretariat to include a meeting of the Management Working Group in the work programme of the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee, and requests that the Chair of the STRP submit a report on the latest progress in fulfilling its mandate for the Group to consider at that meeting.

Annex 2

Report of the Subgroup on Finance, 15 June 2020

Participants

Members of the Subgroup on Finance

Australia, Costa Rica, Estonia, Japan, Mexico (chair), Panama, Senegal (also representing RRI SenegalWet), Sierra Leone, Switzerland and United States of America.

Contracting Party Observers:

Brazil, Colombia (also representing RRI Amazon River Basin), Congo, Guatemala, Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, North Macedonia, Peru, Russian Federation and Sweden.

Representatives of other RRIs (*present until end of discussion under Item 1.2 below*) Coordinators of Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA) and Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI).

Secretariat:

Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, Finance Officer, Senior Regional Advisors, Documentation Officer, Executive Assistant to the Secretary General, IT Officer and Conference and Governance Services Assistant.

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked members of the Subgroup for the useful exchanges prior to the meeting that allowed clarification of several points in the documents prepared by the Secretariat. He expressed thanks for the new documentation prepared, including budget scenarios to take into account the current pandemic and related uncertainties.

1. **Core budget 2020** (document SC58 Doc.8.2 *Report on financial matters for 2019 and 2020 – action items listed below*)

1.1. Action item v) core budget 2020

The Secretary General provided an overview of the reserve fund (at maximum of 15% of the budget), operational reserve and estimated savings in different scenarios (current, with possible lifting of travel restrictions and with travel restrictions).

Subgroup members stressed the need for budgetary caution in light of the unprecedented economic risks due to the pandemic and for flexibility to accommodate uncertainty and future needs. Opportunities and costs of virtual approaches were discussed.

Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approve the adjusted budget for 2020 attached in Annex I. The Subgroup will monitor implementation of the budget and adjust as needed.

It further recommends that the Standing Committee requests the creation of two separate budget lines in future budgets: 1) for provisions for outstanding contributions and 2) staff related provisions.

1.2. Action item vi) allocation for Ramsar Regional Initiatives

The Subgroup asked the representatives of the four Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) which are eligible to receive support from the core budget to confirm that they are able to implement their work plans and use the funds despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic. The RRI provided responses to this effect.

Subgroup members noted the need to ensure that RRI should only use Convention core funds for regional rather than national activities, and asked the Secretariat to remind RRI of this.

The Secretary General observed that agenda item 22.2 of SC58 addresses the reports of RRI and provides an opportunity to strengthen guidance in line with Resolution XIII.9, including through enhanced reporting. A revised template is proposed at Annex 2 of the associated document.

It was also noted that some RRI had carried over unspent funds from 2019, and that the timeframe for eligibility to receive core budget funding might need to be extended beyond the usual two triennia for some RRI as a result of the present circumstances.

Some Subgroup members also expressed an openness to receiving, for consideration at their October meeting, requests for additional core budget funding from eligible RRI, taking into account the evolution of the pandemic and their capacity to implement the core budget resources provided by the Convention.

Recommendation for decisions by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approve the allocation of CHF 15,000 from an original proposal of 25,000 to each of the four eligible Ramsar Regional Initiatives for their activities in 2020 from the core budget line D "Support to Regional Initiatives", taking into account carry-overs from 2019 and the pandemic situation that is likely to lead to restrained activities during the remainder of 2020.

The Subgroup of Finance further recommends that the Standing Committee pay special attention to the implementation of Decision SC57-11 and to the progress of the working group on Ramsar regional initiatives and the tasks entrusted through Resolution XIII.9, which include actions to improve transparency through new operational guidelines. It further considered the following actions to enhance the decision-making and oversight ability of the Subgroup of Finance on matters related to RRI:

- 1. Enhance the reporting requirements to improve their accountability, and good practices on financial management, as part of the Standing Committee's consideration of agenda item 22.2 at SC58; and***
- 2. Undertake a study of RRI to better understand their impact, progress and effectiveness in assisting Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Convention, taking into account the report on the Legal Status of RRI and the Review of RRI Resolutions and Decisions to be considered by SC58 in agenda items 22.3 and 22.4 respectively to avoid duplication.***

1.3. Action item vii) allocation for the Review of Resolutions

Different views were presented, including the importance of carrying out this task and its usefulness for preparing new resolutions. Group members agreed that this topic is an issue under the agenda of the Standing Committee and that it will be considered by that Committee. The review of resolutions on RRI was also noted as being helpful to the RRI Working Group. Other views were expressed questioning the overly large scale of the task and whether this would be a top priority for the Standing Committee.

Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee approve the allocation of CHF 20,000 from savings from the 2019 carry forward in legal services in the core budget for the review of Resolutions, for a total of CHF 40,000 when combined with previously allocated funding, if the activity proposed in paragraph 37 of document SC58 Doc.13 is identified as a top priority by the Standing Committee. This allocation would be moved to the budget line Resolutions review under Standing Committee Services.

2. **2019 results** (document SC58 Doc.8.2 Report on financial matters for 2019 and 2020 – action items i), ii), iii) and iv)):

Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:

- accept the 2019 audited financial statements as of 31 December 2019;***
- note the core budget results for 2019;***
- note the non-core balances and voluntary contributions for 2019; and***
- note the reallocation of the 2019 budget as described in paragraph 14 of document SC58 Doc.8.2.***

3. **Status of annual contributions** (document SC58 Doc.8.3 – Action items i), ii), iii) and iv))

Recommendations for decisions by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee:

- take note of the status of annual contributions;***
- note the actions listed in paragraphs 15, 17 and 18 of document SC58 Doc.8.3 to continue encouraging the payment of annual contributions;***
- asks the Secretariat to continue to publish the status of each Party's contribution on the Convention's website and that it invites the Parties with outstanding contributions to agree on a payment plan in discussion with the Secretariat; and***
- request the Secretariat to work with Parties which have been able to pay outstanding contributions, particularly long-standing ones, to identify good practices and efforts that could be shared.***

The Subgroup considered other options used by other organizations and listed in the document under paragraph 19 points b) to d). Different views were expressed and given the

diversity of views, the Chair referred this issue to the Standing Committee, including the following options mentioned under paragraph 19, for its consideration:

- b. Parties with outstanding contributions being deprived of the right to vote (World Meteorological Organization);
- c. representatives of Parties with contributions outstanding for four years and more not being considered for funding for intersessional workshops and meetings (Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions); and
- d. Parties with more than four years of outstanding contributions not being allowed financial support to participate in the Convention's Conference of Contracting Parties, and hence deprived of the right to vote (Convention on Migratory Species).

Recommendations for decisions by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance further recommends that the Standing Committee:

- ***note the change in annual contributions receivable and in the annual provision against contributions receivable;***
- ***note the status of the African voluntary contributions; and***
- ***note the decision on allocation of funds to Ramsar Regional Initiatives in Africa by the African Regional Representatives as follows: CHF 30,333 each for RamCEA, WACoWet and NigerWet.***

4. Other matters (document SC58 Doc.8.2 *Report on financial matters for 2019 and 2020 – action items listed below*):

4.1. Action item viii) progress in implementing the recommendations of the IUCN *Financial Management Review of Non-core (Restricted) Fund Accounts*, and approval of the proposal on the use of management fees, as described in paragraph 43.

Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee note the progress in implementing the recommendations of the IUCN Financial Management Review of Non-core (Restricted) Fund Accounts, and approve the proposal on the use of management fees, as described in paragraph 43.

4.2. Action item ix) external auditor's proposal on group confirmation of outstanding Contracting Party balances in response to Decision SC57-40, and approval of the proposed way forward in paragraph 50 and 51."

Recommendation for decision by the Standing Committee:

The Subgroup on Finance recommends that the Standing Committee consider the external auditor's proposal on group confirmation of outstanding Contracting Party balances in response to Decision SC57-40, and approve the proposed way forward in paragraph 50 and 51.

Report of the Subgroup on Finance, Annex I: Proposed Core Budget 2020

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
						Possible savings in CO13- approved budget (A) F	Possible savings in carry forward 2019 to 2020 (D) G	
EXPENDITURE								
A. Secretariat Senior Management	1,009	5	0	126	1,140	10	54	1,075
Salaries and social costs	918	0	0	71	989	0	0	989
Other employment benefits	51	0	0	36	87	0	36	51
Travel	40	5	0	18	63	10	18	35
B. Resource Mobilization and Outreach	639	45	81	269	1,033	147	199	687
Salaries and social costs	450	0	0	184	634	90	184	360
Other employment benefits	5	0	0	5	10	0	0	10
CEPA Program	30	0	0	23	53	0	0	53
Comms, Translations, Publications and Reporting Implementation	60	40	0	56	156	0	0	156
WWD & 50th Anniversary 2021	0	0	43	0	43	0	0	43
Web/IT support and Development	84	0	38	(14)	108	47	0	60
Travel	10	5	0	15	30	10	15	5
C. Regional Advice and Support	1,324	10	96	152	1,582	53	152	1,377
Salaries and social costs	1,178	0	0	91	1,269	0	91	1,178
Other employment benefits	71	0	0	40	111	0	40	71
Travel	75	10	0	21	106	53	21	32
Ramsar Advisory Missions	0	0	96	0	96	0	0	96

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
						Possible savings in CO13- approved budget (A) F	Possible savings in carry forward 2019 to 2020 (D) G	
D. Support to Regional Initiatives	100	0	107	0	207	40	0	167
RI WG Res. XIII.9,p9 & Capacity Building	0	0	46	0	46	0	0	46
Activity 1: Senegal Basin	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
Activity 2: Amazon Basin	25	0	61	0	86	10	0	76
Activity 3: Central Asia	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
Activity 4: Indo-Burma	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
E. Scientific and Technical Services	754	5	121	145	1,025	(59)	79	1,006
Salaries and social costs	559	0	0	31	590	(90)	0	680
Other employment benefits	4	0	0	3	7		0	7
Travel	10	0	0	0	10	0	0	10
Travel STRP Chair	5	0	0	2	7	0	0	7
STRP implementation	35	5	0	31	71	0	0	71
STRP meetings	50	0	0	16	66	0	16	50
Strategic Plan (2019 - 2021)	0	0	29	0	29	0	0	29
SDG 6.61 (Inventories)	0	0	91	0	91	0	0	91
Ramsar Sites Information Service (maintenance and develop)	91	0	0	62	153	31	62	60
G. Administration/RSIS/Web	436	11	83	151	682	18	125	539
Salaries and social costs	315	0	0	106	421	0	106	315
Other employment benefits	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staff hiring and departure costs	25	0	0	26	51	0	0	51

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
						Possible savings in CO13- approved budget (A) F	Possible savings in carry forward 2019 to 2020 (D) G	
Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equipment/Office Supplies	95	0	0	19	114	18	19	77
Planning and Capacity building	0	11	83	0	94	0	0	94
H. Standing Committee Services	150	0	75	15	240	0	(20)	260
Standing Committee delegates' support	45	0	0	6	51	0	0	51
Standing Committee meetings	10	0	0	0	10	0	0	10
SC translation	60	0	0	5	65	0	0	65
Simultaneous interpretation at SC meetings	35	0	0	4	39	0	0	39
Effectiveness Working Group	0	0	55	0	55	0	0	55
Resolutions review (Res. XIII.4)	0	0	20	0	20	0	(20)	40
J. IUCN Administrative Service Charges (max.)	560	0	0	36	596	31	36	529
Administration, Human Resources, Finance & IT services	560	0	0	36	596	31	36	529
K. Miscellaneous - Reserve Fund	109	0	25	26	160	0	(136)	296
Provisions	50	0	0	6	56	0	(156)	212
Exchange rate gains / losses	0	0	0	(29)	(29)	0	0	(29)
Legal Services	59	0	25	49	133	0	20	113
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5,081	76	588	919	6,664	240	489	5,936

*carry forward in the same budget line as per the Standing Committee Decision SC57-50

**possible savings due to current COVID-19 pandemic outbreak

Annex 3

Report and recommendations of the Executive Team, 17 June 2020

Participants:

Executive Team Members

- Mexico
- Sweden
- United Arab Emirates

Secretariat

- Secretary General
- Deputy Secretary General

Summary:

The Executive Team met to discuss SC58 agenda item 20.4, “action requested” iv. Process for the preparation and review of draft resolutions: purpose and timing of regional pre-COP meetings.

The Executive Team reviewed the implications and challenges of the delay of SC58 on the timeline of meetings before COP14 and in particular the role and feasibility, including financial, of regional pre-COP meetings. The Executive Team discussed the challenges for the Secretariat to organize seven meetings (an STRP meeting, five regional pre-COP meetings and one Standing Committee meeting) in 2021 before the COP14 (plus COP14 in the same year).

The Executive Team noted the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic with associated challenges for travelling and the crowded schedule of meetings. The environmental footprint of the meetings was also considered. It further noted that the regional pre-COP meetings are not mandated by any Resolution nor referenced in the Rules of Procedure. It further stressed the challenge of seeking financial support for these meetings especially in the same year when financial support is also being sought for delegate travel to the COP.

At the same time, it recognized the importance of providing opportunities for Contracting Parties of the same region to prepare their participation in COP14 and share their positions on draft resolutions. In order to maintain these regional opportunities to prepare their participation, this could take place just before the COP starts in a back-to-back meeting.

Recommendation to Standing Committee:

With this in mind, the Executive Team recommends that the Standing Committee:

- agree that two days of regional pre-COP meetings take place immediately before COP14, at the same location as COP14, and
- instruct the Secretariat to discuss with the host country the necessary arrangements for two days of pre-COP meetings to take place immediately before COP14.

Annex 4

Approved Core Budget 2020

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
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EXPENDITURE								
A. Secretariat Senior Management	1,009	5	0	126	1,140	10	54	1,075
Salaries and social costs	918	0	0	71	989	0	0	989
Other employment benefits	51	0	0	36	87	0	36	51
Travel	40	5	0	18	63	10	18	35
B. Resource Mobilization and Outreach	639	45	81	269	1,033	147	199	687
Salaries and social costs	450	0	0	184	634	90	184	360
Other employment benefits	5	0	0	5	10	0	0	10
CEPA Program	30	0	0	23	53	0	0	53
Comms, Translations, Publications and Reporting Implementation	60	40	0	56	156	0	0	156
WWD & 50th Anniversary 2021	0	0	43	0	43	0	0	43
Web/IT support and Development	84	0	38	(14)	108	47	0	60
Travel	10	5	0	15	30	10	15	5
C. Regional Advice and Support	1,324	10	96	152	1,582	53	152	1,377

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
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Salaries and social costs	1,178	0	0	91	1,269	0	91	1,178
Other employment benefits	71	0	0	40	111	0	40	71
Travel	75	10	0	21	106	53	21	32
Ramsar Advisory Missions	0	0	96	0	96	0	0	96
D. Support to Regional Initiatives	100	0	107	0	207	40	0	167
RI WG Res. XIII.9,p9 & Capacity Building	0	0	46	0	46	0	0	46
Activity 1: Senegal Basin	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
Activity 2: Amazon Basin	25	0	61	0	86	10	0	76
Activity 3: Central Asia	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
Activity 4: Indo-Burma	25	0	0	0	25	10	0	15
E. Scientific and Technical Services	754	5	121	145	1,025	(59)	79	1,006
Salaries and social costs	559	0	0	31	590	(90)	0	680
Other employment benefits	4	0	0	3	7		0	7
Travel	10	0	0	0	10	0	0	10
Travel STRP Chair	5	0	0	2	7	0	0	7
STRP implementation	35	5	0	31	71	0	0	71
STRP meetings	50	0	0	16	66	0	16	50
Strategic Plan (2019 - 2021)	0	0	29	0	29	0	0	29
SDG 6.61 (Inventories)	0	0	91	0	91	0	0	91

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
						Possible savings in CO13- approved budget (A) F	Possible savings in carry forward 2019 to 2020 (D) G	
Ramsar Sites Information Service (maintenance and develop)	91	0	0	62	153	31	62	60
G. Administration/RSIS/Web	436	11	83	151	682	18	125	539
Salaries and social costs	315	0	0	106	421	0	106	315
Other employment benefits	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staff hiring and departure costs	25	0	0	26	51	0	0	51
Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equipment/Office Supplies	95	0	0	19	114	18	19	77
Planning and Capacity building	0	11	83	0	94	0	0	94
H. Standing Committee Services	150	0	75	15	240	0	(6)	246
Standing Committee delegates' support	45	0	0	6	51	0	0	51
Standing Committee meetings	10	0	0	0	10	0	0	10
SC translation	60	0	0	5	65	0	0	65
Simultaneous interpretation at SC meetings	35	0	0	4	39	0	0	39
Effectiveness Working Group	0	0	55	0	55	0	0	55
Resolutions review (Res. XIII.4)	0	0	20	0	20	0	(6)	26
J. IUCN Administrative Service Charges (max.)	560	0	0	36	596	31	36	529
Administration, Human Resources, Finance & IT services	560	0	0	36	596	31	36	529

2020 Ramsar Budget COP13 Approved CHF '000s	Approved budget (COP13- approved) A	Authorised use of surplus COP13 XIII.2 (for 2020) B	Pre- committed 2019 to be spent in 2020 C	Uncommitted carry forward 2019 to 2020* D	Total 2020 budget before the adjustments E=A+B+C+D	Adjustments to original budget**		SC58 Total Approved Budget 2020 H=E-F-G
						Possible savings in CO13- approved budget (A) F	Possible savings in carry forward 2019 to 2020 (D) G	
K. Miscellaneous - Reserve Fund	109	0	25	26	160	0	(150)	310
Provisions	50	0	0	6	56	0	(156)	212
Exchange rate gains / losses	0	0	0	(29)	(29)	0	0	(29)
Legal Services	59	0	25	49	133	0	6	127
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5,081	76	588	919	6,664	240	489	5,936

*carry forward in the same budget line as per the Standing Committee Decision SC57-50

**possible savings due to current COVID-19 pandemic outbreak

Annex 5

List of participants

23 June:

Standing Committee members:

Algeria
Armenia
Australia
China (COP14 host)
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Japan
Mexico
Sweden (Vice-chair)
United Arab Emirates (Chair)
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Uruguay

Contracting Party Permanent Observer:

Switzerland

Contracting Party observers:

Brazil
Colombia
Fiji
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Myanmar
North Macedonia
Norway
Panama
Peru
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
United States of America
Uzbekistan

Other observer:

Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel

25 June:

Standing Committee members:

Algeria
Armenia
Australia
Bhutan

Chad
China (COP14 host)
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Japan
Mexico
Oman
Sweden (Vice-chair)
Uganda
United Arab Emirates (Chair)
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Uruguay

Contracting Party Permanent Observer:

Switzerland

Contracting Party observers:

Brazil
Colombia
Fiji
Guatemala
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Madagascar
Myanmar
Panama
Peru
Romania
Senegal
Thailand
United States of America

Other observer:

Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel