

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 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda

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

Agenda item 5: Report of the Management Working Group

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)

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

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*

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*

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.

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)

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 RRI's)

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 RRI's 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*

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.*

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*

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*

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”.

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 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.

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.