

Summary of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: 22-29 October 2018

The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP13) was held from 22-29 October 2018, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, under the theme “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future.” Over 1360 participants representing 143 of the 170 parties to the Convention, as well as the International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Ramsar Convention, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the meeting.

COP13 adopted 25 resolutions, including on:

- a language strategy with a step-by-step plan to add Arabic as the fourth Convention language;
- gender;
- peatlands;
- blue carbon ecosystems;
- sustainable urbanization;
- agriculture;
- intertidal wetlands;
- wetlands in West Asia; and
- Arctic and sub-Arctic wetlands.

The release of the Global Wetland Outlook provided a touchstone for discussions on challenges ahead to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

A Brief History of the Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention) was signed in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971, and entered into force on 21 December 1975. The Convention provides a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Originally emphasizing conservation and wise use of habitat for waterbirds, the Convention subsequently broadened its scope, recognizing the importance of wetlands as ecosystems that contribute to both biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Wetlands cover an estimated 6% of the Earth’s land surface, and contribute significantly to the global economy in terms of water supply, fisheries, agriculture, forestry, and tourism. The Convention currently has 170 parties. A total of 2,326 wetland sites, covering nearly 250 million hectares, are included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). The Ramsar List includes the Montreux Record, which is a register of wetland sites where changes in ecological

character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution, or other human interference.

Parties commit themselves to:

- designate at least one site that meets the Ramsar criteria for inclusion in the Ramsar List and ensure maintenance of each site’s ecological character;
- include wetland conservation within national land-use planning to promote the wise use of all wetlands within their territory;
- establish nature reserves on wetlands and promote training in research and management; and
- consult with other parties about Convention implementation, especially regarding transboundary wetlands, shared water systems, shared species, and development projects affecting wetlands.

Contracting parties meet every three years. In addition to the COP, the Convention’s work is supported by a Standing Committee (SC), a Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and the Ramsar Bureau, which carries out the functions of a Secretariat.

Key Turning Points

The Conference of the Parties has met 12 times since 1980. Extraordinary COPs (ExCOPs) were held in 1982 and 1987. The Ramsar ExCOP (December 1982) established the Paris Protocol for amending the Convention and adopted official versions of the Convention in six languages. The Ramsar ExCOP (May-June 1987) adopted the Regina Amendments, which defined the powers of the COP, and established the SC, Ramsar Bureau (secretariat), and a budget.

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COP6 (March 1996) adopted the first Ramsar Strategic Plan for 1997-2002.

COP7 (May 1999) articulated the “three pillars” of action: wise use of wetlands; designation and management of Ramsar Sites; and international cooperation. COP7 also confirmed BirdLife International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International, and World Wide Fund for Nature as International Organization Partners of the Convention.

COP8 (November 2002) focused on the role of wetlands in water provision, as well as their cultural and livelihoods aspects. Delegates approved the Convention’s Work Plan for 2003-2005 and Strategic Plan for 2003-2008.

COP9 (November 2005) adopted the Convention’s Work Plan for the 2006-2008 triennium, and reviewed its Strategic Plan 2003-2008. An informal Ministerial Dialogue adopted the Kampala Declaration, which emphasized the role of the Convention in arresting the continued loss and degradation of wetland ecosystems.

COP10 (November 2008) adopted the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2009-2015. Delegates also adopted resolutions on wetlands and climate change, and on wetlands and biofuels.

COP12 (June 2015) convened under the theme “Wetlands for our Future.” COP12 adopted 16 resolutions by consensus, including: the Strategic Plan 2016-2024; a new framework for the delivery of scientific and technical advice, and guidance on the Convention; peatlands; disaster risk reduction; and a wetland city accreditation of the Ramsar Convention.

COP13 Report

Ramsar COP13 opened on Monday evening, 22 October. Uruguay, the COP12 host country, handed over the ceremonial Ramsar flag to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), transferring the COP Presidency for the next triennium.

Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE, welcomed delegates to COP13 and highlighted wetlands as extremely biodiverse ecosystems, which provide a wide range of social and economic services. He noted that from 2004 to 2007 mangroves in the UAE expanded from 41 to 183 square kilometers.

Ramsar Standing Committee Chair Jorge Rucks (Uruguay) said the SC is striving to act responsibly and transparently to carry out its mandate. He underscored the need to apply scientific knowledge and technology to ensure sustainable protection of wetlands.

Dawood Al Hajiri, Dubai Municipality, stated that Dubai prioritizes the environment and understands the importance of wetlands. He expressed hope that more wetlands in Dubai will be added to the Ramsar List in the future.

Razan Al Mubarak, Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi, stressed that COP13 is the first time the Ramsar Convention has convened in the Arab region, underscoring the opportunity to celebrate diversity and address the immense challenges to wetlands through collective wisdom, use of technology, and smart, innovative solutions.

Highlighting the threats that oceans face, Peter Thomson, UN Special Envoy for the Ocean, noted that the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “offer a plan to reverse the cycle of decline.” He reminded delegates that SDG 14.2 (sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems) matures in 2020, urging immediate action for the sake of future generations.

Stewart Maginnis, IUCN, expressed confidence that COP13 will be another successful milestone in advancing wetlands conservation, emphasizing the urgency of action due to “the relentless pressures on wetlands and the shocking speed of wetland loss.”

Elizabeth Mrema, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim, highlighted the staggering rate of decline in freshwater species, which reached 81% over the last 40 years. She emphasized relevant resolutions of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and outlined achievements over the last biennium in collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat.

Jane Madgwick, Wetlands International, speaking on behalf of the IOPs, said it is crucial to conserve and protect wetlands to meet the SDGs. She urged parties to commit to act on the links between wetlands, peace, and security.

Ramsar Secretary General Martha Rojas Urrego expressed concern that wetlands are being lost three times faster than forests, and since 1970, 35% of all wetlands have disappeared. She said the Global Wetlands Outlook (GWO) is a “distress signal and a wake-up call” and urged delegates to rise to the challenge, highlighting that COP13 is a moment for decisive action to protect wetlands.

Speaking from the business perspective, Florence Fontani, Engie, acknowledged that her company has a duty of care to address impacts on local ecosystems and biodiversity, and said its ambition is to drive urban transformation for green and more efficient communities.

Assma Gosaibat, Total UAE, on behalf of company president Hatem Nseibeh, said the success of her company requires recognizing social impacts where it operates, noting various endeavors to protect wetlands.

Organizational Matters: On Tuesday, 23 October, COP13 elected Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE, as President and Mohamed Saif Al Afkham, Director General, Fujairah Municipality, UAE, as Alternate President. Plenary elected Kristiina Niikonen (Finland), as Vice President and rapporteur, and Paul Mafabi, (Uganda) as Vice President.

Delegates then adopted the agenda (COP13 Doc.3.1 Rev.1) and the provisional working programme (COP13 Doc.3.2 Rev.1) without modifications.

The Secretariat introduced the provisional rules of procedure adopted at COP12 (COP13 Doc.4.1) and proposed amendments to the rules of procedure (COP13 Doc.4.2), noting suggested amendments by Japan, the US, and Sweden.

Austria, on behalf of the European Union (EU) member states present at COP13, supported by Chile, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, emphasized the need for consistent and balanced rules of procedure, and suggested postponing discussion until consideration of draft resolutions on the Convention’s efficiency and structure. The US expressed willingness to use the existing rules of procedure. Jordan said he was open to considering the proposed amendments. Japan noted the suggested amendments regarding the meeting’s executive summary and summary record (Rule 51) will improve accuracy and provide a better alternative. Delegates agreed to continue work under the current rules of procedure as adopted at COP12, taking into consideration Japan’s amendment on the summary report.

Delegates approved the admission as observers of bodies or agencies that met the requirements of the rules of procedure (COP13 Doc.7).

On Tuesday, 23 October, COP13 appointed the following parties as members of the Credentials Committee: Benin, Armenia, Mexico, Samoa, Ecuador, and the Philippines. On Monday, 29 October, Armenia reported that of the 170 contracting parties, COP13 had 143 participating parties; credentials for 120 parties were approved and 10 parties had not submitted credentials.

On Friday, 26 October, the COP elected parties to the 2019-2021 Ramsar SC. The following parties (and alternates) were selected to represent Ramsar's six regions: Chad, Algeria, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Zambia (Central African Republic, Libya, Rwanda, Senegal, and Lesotho) for Africa; the UK, Sweden, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, (Austria, Estonia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine) for Europe; Australia (Fiji) for Oceania; Mexico (the US) for North America; Bhutan, Japan, and Oman (the Philippines, China, and Kuwait) for Asia; and Uruguay, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic (Ecuador, El Salvador, and Saint Lucia) for Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Reports

On Tuesday, 23 October, delegates heard reports about the work of the SC, Secretary General, the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Programme, and the STRP.

Report of the SC Chair: SC Chair Jorge Rucks provided an overview of SC activities for the period 2015-2018 (COP13 Doc.8), calling for parties to renew their commitment to the sustainable management of wetlands.

World Wetland Network called on parties to engage with NGOs, local communities, indigenous peoples, and young people, at all levels. Noting that the Ramsar Convention will turn 50 in 2021, she called for bold action, asking, "What will be our legacy?"

Report of the Secretary General on Global Implementation: Introducing the report on the global implementation of the Convention (COP13 Doc.11.1), Secretary General Rojas Urrego offered a general overview on implementation, based on available reports, including on regional implementation. She noted that 147 national reports had been submitted as of July 2018, saying this is one of the highest rates of reporting among all multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

While noting progress on some indicators, including on inventory of invasive alien species and wetlands policies, Rojas Urrego lamented less progress in other areas, or even a major decrease in implementation, including with respect to: progress on removal of perverse incentives; establishment or review of national policies or guidelines on the control or management of invasive wetland species; restoration and rehabilitation programmes; financial assistance and capacity building; projects that contribute to poverty alleviation; and governance of wetlands as natural water infrastructure.

She urged parties to make strong efforts to improve implementation, particularly in: management of Ramsar Sites; water governance; wetland restoration; policies and regulations; and capacity building and mainstreaming of wetland values in sectoral policies.

Jordan lamented a decrease in financial assistance, asking for more international cooperation.

Armenia expressed concern about a decline in the number of projects supported by the Convention's small grants fund.

Argentina, supported by Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Cuba, and Peru, and opposed by the UK, requested that all maps used by the Secretariat contain double nomenclature for the Sandwich Islands,

South Georgia, and the Malvinas, asserting that these islands are an integral part of the Argentine territory and are illegally occupied by the UK. The UK rejected any changes to the maps, emphasizing its sovereignty over the islands and the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination.

Ukraine lamented that the Russian Federation's occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory had made it "impossible" to comply with the Ramsar Convention and requested the urgent authorization of a Ramsar advisory mission to Crimea to assess the environmental status of the sites. The Russian Federation said the COP is not appropriate for political gestures, and that a pragmatic and non-politicized approach is essential for successful development of conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Senegal said progress in Africa was not sufficiently reflected in the Secretary General's report and highlighted, *inter alia*: the timely report submission by 49 of 50 African countries; his country's hosting of the pre-COP; national funding; designation rates of Ramsar Sites; and removal of sites from the Montreux Record. In response, Cameroon noted the technical challenges associated with a higher level of detail, and cited the Secretary General's visit to Africa as evidence of importance attached to efforts by African countries.

Report of the Secretary General on Work of the Secretariat: Rojas Urrego introduced the report on the work of the Secretariat (COP13 Doc.11.2). She outlined four key areas:

- strengthening the Secretariat's service to parties' decision-making and accountability;
- increasing relevance of wetlands and the Convention to sustainable development policy objectives;
- strengthening support and enabling implementation; and
- strengthening the Secretariat's efficiency and effectiveness.

On decision-making and accountability, she emphasized: organization of Convention meetings; accountability; production of reports, policy briefs, briefing notes, and the online Ramsar site management toolkit; and the challenge of convening many meetings in the same year.

On increasing the relevance of Ramsar's work to the SDGs, she highlighted: designation as co-custodian of SDG indicator 6.6.1 (water-related ecosystems), allowing parties' national reports to be used for reporting on progress under the SDGs; work with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), SDG 14 (life below water), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UNEA, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) assessments; and contributions to the Global Biodiversity Outlook. She noted the difficulty in gaining access to various processes, citing as examples the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) and UN-WATER meetings, due to lack of observer status.

On strengthening support and enabling implementation, she emphasized: webinar training on use of the Ramsar website; the excellent relationship with the IOPs, and updating the relevant Memorandum of Cooperation for the period 2018-2024; taking a strategic approach to resource mobilization; capacity building to help parties fundraise on their own; increased visibility through activities and products such as the World Wetlands Day and the GWO; and extensive social media reach.

On the Secretariat's efficiency and effectiveness, she noted the SC's review of financial management, planning workshops, staff capacity building, consolidation of databases, and development of Standard Operating Procedures.

She concluded by noting the challenges of ensuring coherency across regions and the need for enhanced capacity building and training.

The US, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Uruguay, and others commended the Secretariat's work. The US noted that the Secretary General's leadership "has increased cohesion and restored parties' confidence in the Secretariat."

Jordan suggested additional focus on the needs of developing countries, including capacity building. China, Australia, Bahrain, Colombia, and Austria underscored the importance of synergies with other multilateral agreements and conventions, including the CBD and the UNFCCC, and the SDGs.

Senegal questioned the "contradiction where the Secretary General is allowed to attend some UN fora, but not others," pointing to the HLPF. Uganda highlighted the need to strengthen Ramsar regional initiatives. Colombia emphasized efforts to support parties on specific, identified issues.

Report on the List of Wetlands of International

Importance: The Secretariat introduced the report on the List of Wetlands of International Importance (COP13 Doc.12), noting that it covers the period up to 20 June 2018. He highlighted:

- the designation of 131 new Ramsar Sites adding 27 million hectares;
- four new transboundary Ramsar Sites;
- updating relevant information regarding 300 Ramsar Sites;
- information on Ramsar Sites' reorganization and extension; and
- changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites due to human-induced activities.

Senegal and India requested a number of amendments on updating and extension of Ramsar Sites, and on the Montreux Record to accurately portray the status quo. Argentina, opposed by the UK, requested changes in the Ramsar Sites according to the new nomenclature. Iraq requested additional support for national initiatives. The Republic of Korea lamented outdated Ramsar Information Sheets, calling for additional efforts. Rojas Urrego noted that additional discussions will be needed on the nomenclature.

Administrative and Financial Implications of Draft

Resolutions: The Secretariat introduced the report on administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions (COP13 Doc.17), explaining that it is a background document that sets out potential incremental costs to inform COP13's discussions. Switzerland noted that the document does not include an assessment of proposed changes in governance, adding they can be achieved within existing Convention resources.

On Wednesday, 24 October, Rojas Urrego suggested establishing a small group of parties to examine, in collaboration with the STRP Chair, the requests to the STRP found in different draft resolutions, in order to ensure that these requests are within the STRP's mandate. Delegates agreed, clarifying that there will be regional representation, while the group will remain open for any interested parties.

Report on the Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme: CEPA Oversight Panel Chair Mark Taylor (Australia) reported on the implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme 2016-2018 (COP13 Doc.10). He noted significant progress made against the nine goals of the programme, highlighting that World Wetlands Day had been particularly effective at raising awareness, and outlined a more strategic and focused approach for CEPA in the future.

Many parties welcomed the report.

The Republic of Korea said the Wetlands City accreditation scheme will serve as an effective tool to raise awareness and involve local communities and stakeholders, and called for more such tools to be developed.

Benin requested that supporting materials for World Wetlands Day be made available further in advance, to allow parties to better prepare for celebrations.

Report of the STRP Chair: STRP Chair Royal Gardner (US) presented the STRP report (COP13 Doc.9), focusing on the STRP appointment process and development of work, high priority tasks, and *ad hoc* advisory functions. He highlighted the production and publication of the GWO, noting that it includes "not only sobering statistics, but also response actions to prevent, stop, and reverse wetlands loss and degradation." Gardner also emphasized, *inter alia*:

- Earth observation as a best practice tool for inventorying, mapping, and monitoring wetlands;
- development of guidelines for inventories of peatlands;
- the Ramsar Sites management online toolkit;
- a wetland ecosystem services assessment and valuation policy brief and toolkit;
- a wetlands ecosystems and disaster risk reduction policy brief;
- a policy brief on water requirements for wetlands;
- a consultancy report on the review and analysis of Ramsar advisory mission reports; and
- a draft briefing note on the potential and rationale for wetland restoration in a climate change context.

Jordan called for a clearinghouse mechanism for information exchange. Austria, the US, Cuba, and others complimented STRP on its work, especially the GWO.

Special Presentations

Several special events and presentations took place over the meeting.

Special Event: On the afternoon of Monday, 22 October, the special event "UN Ocean Conference Community of Ocean Action on Mangroves: Progress and opportunities" was held before the official opening of COP13. The event highlighted voluntary commitments to conserve mangroves and sustainably manage marine and coastal ecosystems, focusing on the critical role of mangrove ecosystems for coastal and ocean resilience.

Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards: On Monday evening, 22 October, the Secretariat presented the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards, honoring:

- for wise use of wetlands, the Fundación Global Nature, Spain, acknowledging contributions to long-term sustainable use of wetlands in Spain and beyond, including sustainable farming systems, water treatment, and stakeholder engagement; and
- for young wetlands champions, the Youth Climate Action Network of Samoa, for its work on mangrove and coral reef rehabilitation, public awareness raising, tree planting, and work with sea turtles.

Ma Guangren, China, received a merit award for his work in China and Asia, including on: establishment of national wetland conservation regulations; a wetland status inventory; funding for conservation and restoration projects; and public awareness and education.

SC Chair Rucks presented Danone with an award marking 20 years of successful collaboration and commitment to conserve and sustainably manage wetlands of international importance. Facundo Etchebehere, Danone, stressed the company's belief on collaborative work and the role of the private sector, underscoring "everyone's power to contribute to the transformation of food systems through everyday choices."

Global Wetland Outlook: On Tuesday, 23 October, Secretary General Rojas Urrego introduced the GWO, noting it is the first global report on the status of wetlands and the services they provide.

STRP Chair Gardner and STRP Scientific Expert Max Finlayson (Australia) presented the GWO, focusing on the process of development, context, status and trends, drivers, responses, and next steps.

They emphasized, among others, that:

- accuracy of global wetland area data is increasing;
- natural wetlands have declined and artificial wetlands have increased, noting that 35% of wetlands sites with available information have been lost since 1970;
- the populations of many wetland dependent species are declining and different taxa groups are highly threatened, with a quarter of animal and plant species at risk of extinction;
- water quality trends are mainly negative; and
- wetlands play a critical role in providing valuable ecosystem services.

They further highlighted major direct and indirect drivers of change, as well as megatrends, and offered insights on the way forward, including potential responses related to institutions and governance, management, investment, and knowledge. They specifically called for:

- enhancing the network of Ramsar Sites, noting that half of them lack a management plan;
- integrating wetlands into 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- strengthening legal and policy arrangements; and
- applying economic and financial incentives.

Gardner and Finlayson concluded by underscoring the positive media and social media response to the launch of the GWO; outlined next steps, including webinars, capacity building, and action at national and local levels; and invited participants to share at least one specific example of how they plan to use the GWO.

Wetland City Accreditation: On Thursday morning, 25 October, SC Chair Rucks introduced the Ramsar Wetland City Accreditation procedure, saying 23 applications had been received, with 18 cities recommended to be recognized as Ramsar Wetland Cities. The Republic of Korea and China said the Wetland City Accreditation programme will raise the Convention's visibility at the local level and is a useful tool for further implementation.

On Thursday afternoon, the Secretariat presented certificates to representatives of 18 municipal authorities that had demonstrated strong and positive relationships with wetlands, including: Changde, China; Changshu, China; Dongying, China; Haerbin, China; Haikou, China; Amiens, France; Courteranges, France; Pont Audemer, France; Saint Omer, France; Lakes by Tata, Hungary; Changnyeong, Republic of Korea; Inje, Republic of Korea; Jeju, Republic of Korea; Suncheon, Republic of Korea; Mitsinjo, Madagascar; Colombo, Sri Lanka; and Ghar el Melh, Tunisia.

Resolutions

Plenary began work on 26 draft resolutions on Wednesday, 24 October. Delegates agreed to a revised structure of the working programme to address earlier in the agenda those draft resolutions expected to benefit from informal discussions in contact groups. Additionally, "Friends of the Chair" groups met to resolve differences on many draft resolutions, with some agreements worked out in the closing hours of COP13. One draft resolution was withdrawn and two on governance were combined, with all resolutions adopted by consensus.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention and Improving the Efficiency of Structures and Processes of the Convention: On Wednesday, plenary considered two draft

resolutions on enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention (COP12 Doc.18.1) and improving the efficiency of structures and processes of the Convention (COP12 Doc.18.2).

The US, presenting the draft resolution on enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention, noted that it seeks to address common complaints about the Convention's governance, such as too many working groups.

Switzerland presented the draft resolution on improving the efficiency of structures and processes of the Convention, noting that, in her time as permanent observer on the SC, she has witnessed a large increase in the SC's administrative tasks alongside a large decline in substantive discussion. She called for restoring the technical nature of the Convention, and highlighted that the mandate and outcome of working groups are often unclear.

Oman noted that Switzerland had presented an updated version of the draft resolution on improving the efficiency of structures and processes of the Convention, which was not the version on the Convention's website. The Secretariat noted that in accordance with the rules of procedure, the SC had forwarded the draft resolution to the COP, but the Secretariat had not received the update from Switzerland. Switzerland offered to submit the updated draft resolution to the Secretariat. Senegal cautioned against setting a precedent, noting that under the rules of procedure it is for the SC to submit draft resolutions to the COP, and the appropriate time for Switzerland to submit an updated text is once a working group is established.

The US said Switzerland's updated draft resolution would "dismantle Ramsar as we know it," akin to "open heart surgery without first diagnosing the problem." She said the draft resolution would replace the "streamlined" executive team with a "bloated" bureau and doubted the proposal would be cost-neutral.

Senegal called for streamlining working groups and avoiding duplication of work. Austria noted high global interest at COP13 to strengthen the Convention's governance.

The Dominican Republic cautioned against haste, stating that COP14 should make decisions on revised governance. New Zealand called for a comprehensive assessment of costs, benefits, and risks of changes to the governance structure. Chile, supported by Australia, Honduras, and Cuba, suggested establishing an intersessional working group to present its conclusions to COP14. Australia stressed the need for a measured pathway to reform.

A contact group on the two draft resolutions was established and met throughout the week. The contact group was also tasked with addressing the responsibilities, roles and composition of the SC and regional categorization of countries (COP13 Doc.18.3), but further discussion on this item was deferred until the contact group reported back on the first two draft resolutions.

On Friday, the UK provided an update on the contact group's deliberations noting that it agreed to suggest the establishment of a new effectiveness working group. On Sunday, 28 October, plenary adopted revised text that replaced the two resolutions. The new working group will be expected to work intersessionally to review the Convention's bodies and suggest a way forward to be decided upon at COP14.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.1&2), the COP decides to retire the Transition Committee and the working groups on the CEPA programme, facilitation, the language strategy, resource mobilization, and staffing. The COP invites the Chairs of these subsidiary bodies to provide final reports to SC57, expected to take place in 2019. The COP further confirms that the present resolution supersedes the resolutions/decisions related to the working groups to be retired, and that any

ongoing responsibilities of these groups now revert to the SC to address or delegate further.

The COP establishes the Effectiveness Working Group, directing that it be composed of one SC representative from each Ramsar region and any other interested party, keeping in mind the desirability of equitable participation and manageable size.

The COP requests the Effectiveness Working Group to:

- review the governance structure of the Convention with the assistance of an independent consultant to recommend revisions that further enhance the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention, and propose a process for implementation; and
- define its terms of reference for presentation at SC57 and to report at SC57 and each SC meeting thereafter, with final recommendations at SC59, which should include a draft resolution for consideration by the SC.

The COP also decides to allocate funding from the current identified core budget surplus to support the group's work and that the group is to complete its work by SC59, at which time the group will be retired unless otherwise decided at COP14.

Annex 1 includes the working groups to be retired and the relevant resolutions/decisions that are superseded by the present resolution.

Responsibilities, Roles and Composition of the SC and Regional Categorization of Countries: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the draft resolution on the SC's responsibilities, roles and composition, and regional categorization of countries under the Convention (COP13 Doc.18.3), noting that it updates Resolution XII.4.

On Friday morning, the UK reminded plenary that the contact group on governance was asked to consider this draft resolution and had initiated discussions on the SC's Executive Team (Chair, Vice Chair, and Chair of the Subgroup on Finance), but no agreement was reached due to time limitations.

Ensuing plenary discussions focused on the continuation and mandate of the Executive Team.

Chile, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands underscored lack of clarity regarding the Executive Team's mandate, noting it does not represent parties or regions, and called for increased transparency. Switzerland, the UK, and the Netherlands suggested either to discontinue the Executive Team or precisely describe its tasks. Senegal, Austria, Jordan, and others emphasized the need to enable the Executive Team to represent all regions, stressing uncertainties in its functioning and decision-making process.

Uruguay, Australia, Colombia, Japan, and the US stressed that any decision on the Executive Team should follow the agreed process and be decided in the intersessional working group on governance to be established. The US cautioned against undermining the sensitive balance regarding the review of the Convention's effectiveness by taking drastic decisions about the Executive Team.

The UK offered a compromise, suggesting that the Executive Team's terms of reference be defined for approval at SC57. She suggested that the current structure remain in place while it is examined under the review of the Convention's effectiveness by the intersessional working group, with more clarity to be provided regarding the Executive Team's activities.

New Zealand, Australia, France, Colombia, Japan, Uruguay, the US, Gabon, Senegal, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Guinea, and Cuba supported the UK proposal.

On Sunday, plenary adopted a revised decision, without further amendments.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.3 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- expresses its satisfaction with improvements made by the Secretariat in performance, management, and optimization of resources, and decides to re-establish normalized levels of oversight by the parties while maintaining accountability between the parties and the Secretariat;
- requests the Executive Team to define its terms of reference for approval by SC57;
- requests the Secretariat to use Annex 3 on the responsibilities of parties elected in the SC as a tool to conduct a preparatory briefing for incoming members, and to bring to the attention of the SC the updated consolidated list of resolutions and decisions on the Convention's visibility and synergies with other MEAs, at the beginning of each triennium and as appropriate thereafter;
- further invites incoming members of the SC to participate as observers at meetings of the Bureau; and
- encourages the Secretariat to re-engage with parties in preparing draft resolutions to improve the quality of possible decisions.

The resolution contains four annexes. Annex 1 outlines the responsibilities, roles, and composition of the SC, and regional categorization of countries under the Convention. Annex 2 includes the allocation of parties and non-party states to the six regional groups. Annex 3 addresses the responsibilities of parties elected as regional representatives in the SC. Annex 4 includes an indicative schedule for SC intersessional meetings post-2018 and for the 2019-2021 triennium.

Language Strategy for the Convention: On Wednesday, Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Jonathan Barzdo introduced the draft resolution on the Convention's language strategy (COP13 Doc.18.4), noting it lays out a possible path for introducing the Arabic language, and potentially other languages in the future, into the Convention on a step-by-step basis.

Tunisia for the African Group, Austria for the EU, Jordan, the UAE, the Dominican Republic, Oman, Ecuador, Kuwait, Bahrain, Peru, and Venezuela supported the draft resolution, recalling that Arabic is one of the official UN languages and that the strategy will further enhance public awareness in the Arab region.

Ecuador, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic stressed that the addition of new languages should not aggravate existing difficulties regarding interpretation in other languages, particularly Spanish.

The Dominican Republic and the EU underscored potential budgetary implications. The EU called for securing external or public financial support and suggested publishing documents in all official languages in national websites, linking them with the Ramsar website to allow for additional flexibility.

A working group met over the week to address concerns. A revised draft was adopted with amendments on Sunday. The UAE proposed deleting reference to "subsidiary bodies" in the section of the timetable referring to COP13, noting that translation into other languages had not been provided. With that amendment, the revised draft was adopted.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.4 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- acknowledges that budgetary constraints have precluded the provision of a language service in all six official UN languages;
- encourages parties to provide translation of the most important Ramsar information documents into their own official languages, make them publicly available on their Ramsar websites, and send to the Secretariat translated documents of wider relevance to other parties; and

• instructs the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to implement a cost-effective mechanism to make translated documents available on the Convention's website.

Annex 1 sets out the basic principle for the strategy and a timetable. The timetable outlines a step-by-step process, from COP13 through COP16 (2018-2027), subject to COP budget approval.

Financial and Budgetary Matters: On Tuesday, SC Finance Subgroup Chair Abdou Salam Kane (Senegal) gave a presentation on the execution of the budget for the triennium 2015-2018 (COP13 Doc.14) and on options for the 2019-2021 budget period. He explained the two proposed budget scenarios: a 0% increase option, and a 1.5% increase option, which would require an increase in parties' contributions. He noted the 0% option would include the addition of a full-time accounting assistant, along with cuts to Secretariat work on: communications; regional initiatives; travel; website/IT maintenance; implementation of the STRP work plan; support to Ramsar Sites Information Service; and travel. The alternative 1.5 % increase would avoid cuts to staff travel, communications, and STRP implementation.

Secretary General Rojas Urrego explained that the 0% increase also included a performance-based increase for staff salaries, consistent with IUCN policies. South Africa said parties should approve decisions such as Secretariat staffing, not delegate authority to a working group on finance.

Switzerland suggested including costs for hosting the COP, consistent with other conventions. The Dominican Republic expressed concern about reductions to regional initiatives.

Abdou Salam Kane then introduced the draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters (COP13 Doc.18.5), calling on parties to ensure arrears are paid. A contact group met on Thursday and Friday and plenary approved a revised decision (COP13 Doc.18.5 Rev.1) on Monday.

During plenary discussions, Jordan called for caution before taking a decision on budgetary matters.

Mongolia highlighted that the amount allocated for the Ramsar Sites Information Service had markedly decreased, expressing concern that this might affect the quality of the service.

During discussions on Friday, the Dominican Republic expressed concern about possible delinking of the Secretariat from management of financial resources, saying the Ramsar Convention is a "government" convention and called for solidarity to protect the Convention.

On Monday, regarding text requesting the Secretariat to assist parties in administration of non-core funding, including fundraising, South Africa, on behalf of the African Group, said the Secretariat lacks appropriate legal authority. He requested adding text requesting IUCN to clarify responsibility for signing the agreement regarding the International Climate Initiative project, including management of risks related to the project's implementation and report to SC57 for approval and endorsement.

The Dominican Republic, the US, Argentina, Jamaica, Canada, and many others objected to the proposed amendment, noting, *inter alia*: previous consensus on the draft resolution; potential chilling effect on donors if parties are examining agreement documents; inclusion of the same text in the resolution on regional initiatives (COP13 Doc.18.8 Rev.1); and inappropriateness of singling out a single project/donor. After a brief consultation, and in the spirit of compromise, South Africa, on behalf of the African Group, withdrew the proposal, and the resolution was adopted.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.5 Rev.1) the COP adopts a budget with a 0% increase. The COP, *inter alia*:

- notes that the budget includes a core element funded by parties' contributions, and that the Secretariat will seek additional non-core resources for identified priorities;
- approves the core budget in Annex I;
- approves the use of specified amounts from the core surplus of the 2016-2018 triennium to supplement the 2019-2021 budget for: communications, translation publications, and reporting implementation; staff travel; STRP implementation, planning, and capacity building;
- requests the Secretariat to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the 2019-2021 triennium;
- approves the use of core surplus to support work of the effectiveness working group;
- urges parties with outstanding contributions to settle them as expeditiously as possible;
- notes with concern the situation with voluntary contributions, and encourages parties and others to increase such contributions; and
- notes with appreciation the transparency and accountability regarding Secretariat operations fostered by the Secretary General and requests the Secretariat to establish a section of the Convention website to publish information to ensure transparency and accountability.

The resolution includes four annexes. Annex I includes the budget for core activities for 2019-2021 of CHF5.1 million annually, which includes basic secretariat functions. Annex II lists parties' estimated assessed contributions for the period. Annex III includes budgeted non-core items, with respective three-year funding requirements, for a total of CHF3.1 million, which includes, in order of recommended priority: Ramsar Advisory Missions; gender and wetlands; regional initiatives networks and centres; World Wetlands Day; inventories to report on SDG indicator 6.6.1; sponsorship for eligible delegates; Ramsar CEPA programme; STRP work; Pre-COP14 sponsorship for eligible delegates; and language strategies.

Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.6), recalling that Resolution XII.2 states that a review of the Strategic Plan is to be undertaken at COP14, with relevant modalities to be established at COP13.

Malawi, for the African Group, supported the draft resolution noting that the review will align the Strategic Plan with new developments in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the IPBES second work programme.

Austria, for the EU, called for a regular review of the Strategic Plan every three years to align it with ongoing developments in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the CBD. He suggested amendments to: encourage parties to contribute to an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, ensuring that wetlands are adequately covered; include the outcomes of the GWO and the IPBES assessments; address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; and strengthen cooperation in the CEPA programme.

Canada underscored the opportunity to increase synergies with other MEAs and queried whether evaluation of efforts will be an additional reporting requirement, to which the Secretariat responded that evaluation will be included in national reports. The US offered amendments on the CEPA-related paragraphs of the draft resolution. Burundi underscored the importance of a mid-term assessment. Belgium suggested adding resource allocation from sub-national budgets, in addition to national ones. Australia highlighted the integration of the CEPA programme.

China noted that terminology under SDG target 6.6 (protect and restore water-related ecosystems) is not consistent with relevant Ramsar definitions, urging addressing this at the UN level to ensure consistency. Thailand noted that establishing a working group on the review of the Strategic Plan should be considered in the draft resolutions on enhancing the effectiveness and the efficiency of structures and processes under the Convention.

Plenary considered and adopted a revised draft without further amendments on Sunday.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.6 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes publication of the GWO as a critical resource for review of the Strategic Plan and other relevant processes;
- notes that review of the fourth Strategic Plan coincides with Ramsar's 50th Anniversary, offering an opportunity to highlight implementation achievements and challenges;
- urges parties to continuously monitor implementation and communicate progress and difficulties in their national reports and to their SC regional representative;
- encourages parties that have established National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to harmonize implementation of the Strategic Plan with their NBSAPs;
- encourages parties' national focal to engage their counterparts to seek, *inter alia*, to ensure Strategic Plan indicators are taken into account under the SDGs;
- requests SC56 to establish a Strategic Plan Working Group to conduct review of the fourth Strategic Plan, which will include representation from all Ramsar regions, advice from the STRP, and will invite participation from other biodiversity-related conventions;
- encourages parties that are also CBD parties to actively contribute to development of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework that ensures wetlands and their ecosystems services are adequately covered;

On the CEPA Programme, the resolution, *inter alia*:

- urges parties and invites other governments, IOPs, other organizations, and implementing partners to continue to implement the CEPA programme;
- requests the CEPA Oversight Panel to continue monitoring CEPA issues at the national level and implementation progress, and to advise the SC and Secretariat on CEPA priorities;
- instructs the CEPA Oversight Panel to develop a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention, as outlined in Resolution XII.9, and report its progress at SC58 and SC59;
- requests the Secretariat to continue its support for implementation of the CEPA Programme and, upon request, for the Panel's work to develop a new approach for advising and supporting CEPA in the Convention; and
- invites parties and others to make resources available for implementation of the CEPA Programme at the national and regional levels.

The resolution contains one annex, which includes, *inter alia*: the scope and modality of the review; an indicative timeline of key activities by the Strategic Plan Working Group to review progress in implementing the plan up to 2021; and an indicative budget of CHF44,000, authorized at SC54 for working group members' travel, and a consultancy to support the SC and the working group.

The working group is to take into account, *inter alia*, input from parties, the conclusions of the GWO, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and targets, the post-2020 global biodiversity

framework to be adopted by the CBD in 2020; and other global developments.

Enhancing the Convention's Implementation, Visibility and Synergies: On Wednesday, plenary considered the draft resolution on enhancing the Convention's implementation, visibility, and synergies with other MEAs and other international institutions (COP13 Doc.18.7).

On implementation, Iran expressed support for text regarding establishment of a process to retire outdated or contradictory resolutions or decisions. The UK requested removal of the text.

The UK, supported by Finland, requested the removal of all paragraphs addressing enhancement of the implementation of the Convention. The US requested retaining the paragraphs, noting that although the same subject matter is covered in other draft resolutions, the status of those resolutions is currently unclear.

Colombia and Canada opposed paragraphs requesting the SC to identify urgent challenges to the wise use of wetlands to receive enhanced attention during the upcoming triennium, saying the COP should identify priorities and challenges.

On visibility and increasing synergies, China and France called for including a high-level segment in all COP agendas, highlighting the potential for raising the visibility of the Convention.

Canada suggested removing a paragraph encouraging parties to indicate in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement options to create an enabling environment to safeguard and support wetlands, and to specify relevant policies and actions, saying that NDCs should focus on greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

France said the Secretariat should concentrate on possible synergies, particularly with SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 14 (life below water), and 15 (life on land). India stressed the relevance of SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing).

Eswatini supported the resolution while noting that it could be improved.

On Monday, the UK, with Finland, requested that several paragraphs in the draft text on implementation be moved to the resolution on the responsibilities, roles, and composition of the Standing Committee (COP13 Doc.18.3 Rev.1). With this amendment, the draft resolution was adopted.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.7 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- invites the Secretariat, parties, IOPs, and others to work to raise the visibility of the Convention at the national, subnational, regional, and international levels, as appropriate, including some focus on the 50th anniversary of the Convention in 2021;
- invites parties to establish or strengthen, at the national level, mechanisms to enhance effective coordination between relevant national and subnational authorities, to support the mainstreaming of wetland ecosystem functions and ecosystem services in national development plans, other sectors' strategies, plans, and regulations, and to increase synergies in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- urges the Secretariat, parties, IOPs, and others to take urgent action to enhance synergies, coherence, and effective cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs to strengthen their contribution to a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the realization of the 2030 Agenda;
- requests the Secretariat to present, at SC58, a plan to strengthen synergies with other MEAs and contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

- encourages parties to consider their national circumstances and ecosystem-based approaches when preparing or updating their NDCs, as applicable and where appropriate, and pursuing domestic climate action under the Paris Agreement, taking into account the importance of safeguarding and restoring wetlands;
- instructs the Secretariat to continue working actively with the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators, as well as with other relevant UN agencies, on water-related indicators particularly SDG indicator 6.6.1 (wetland extent);
- instructs the Secretariat to participate, as appropriate, in relevant international efforts to address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including the HLPF and the discussion of SDGs 14 and 15 and Targets 14.2 (marine and coastal ecosystems) and 15.1 (terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems) in international fora; and
- invites parties that are also parties to other MEAs to consider further measures to promote national level synergies so as to foster policy coherence, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication, and enhance cooperation, coordination, and synergies among MEAs and other partners as a means to enhance coherent national implementation of the Convention.

Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021: On Wednesday, plenary considered the draft resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) 2019-2021 and their Operational Framework (COP13 Doc.18.8).

Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mongolia, and Cuba expressed support for the resolution as drafted.

Sweden, supported by Senegal and Slovenia and opposed by the Dominican Republic, proposed that the draft resolution be divided into two separate resolutions: one, which would be long-lived, would contain the Operational Framework; the other, which would be repealed after the next triennium, would contain only content relevant for the RRIs 2019-2021.

Turkey requested the removal of language on transboundary rivers, stating it is beyond the Convention's mandate. Senegal stressed it is up to each RRI to decide on its own rules and operational governance structures. New Zealand said it is not always appropriate for RRIs to be led by national Ramsar Administrative Authorities. Australia supported allowing the SC to approve new RRIs.

Argentina, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, Japan, and Chile emphasized contracting parties should manage RRIs. Brazil and Colombia opposed creating parallel management structures.

The US, supported by Japan, Mongolia, and Australia, emphasized welcoming diversity in the RRIs, rather than forcing them to conform to a one-size-fits-all model, although noting that minimum standards are needed on financial reporting.

On Friday, Colombia, on behalf of the Americas regions, said some parties are not considering the document as a whole, which is inconsistent with recognizing SC decisions on draft resolutions, and requested legal advice for the contact group.

A contact group met on Thursday, Friday, and Monday. On Sunday, Senegal, supported by the UK and the US, noted that the contact group had reached consensus on the continuation of the relevant working group, and requested amending the annex in the draft resolution on governance (COP13 Doc.18.1&2) to reflect that decision. On Monday, plenary adopted a revised decision, without further amendments.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc. 18.8 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*, decides that RRIs, to maintain their formal recognition as an RRI, have to be in line with the following principles:

- RRIs must be endorsed by the COP, or intersessionally by the SC;
- RRIs must be subject to review by each COP;
- RRIs must develop terms of reference, which deal with their own rules of procedure, structure, governance and membership, including the status of the Secretariat's participation in the RRI, and should be consistent with the decisions and resolutions of the COP;
- RRIs must be financially accountable;
- RRIs should undertake tasks that have to do with the implementation of the Convention in their region and can speak in their own name only, using their own logo only;
- RRIs must submit to the Secretariat, according to the format approved by the SC, an annual report of progress on their work and a financial summary at the end of each year, together with a work plan and budget for the following year; and
- RRIs established for fewer than six years that want to apply for financial support from the Ramsar Convention core budget start-up funding must request it in their budget submitted for the following year.

In addition, the COP, *inter alia*:

- endorses 19 existing RRIs as operating in the framework of the Convention until COP14;
- decides that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to eligible RRIs for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 will be determined annually by the SC, based on their most recent annual reports and updated work plans, and informed by specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance to the SC;
- urges RRIs that receive financial support from the core budget to consider using part of this support to seek sustainable funding from other sources;
- encourages parties, and invites other potential donors, to support RRIs;
- instructs the Secretariat to publicize RRIs at the global level as a mechanism to provide international cooperation and support for the implementation of the Convention;
- encourages parties to invite regional intergovernmental, international, and non-governmental organizations, and organizations of indigenous peoples and local communities, and transboundary river and groundwater basin organizations, to participate in or collaborate with RRIs; and
- instructs the Secretariat's legal adviser to review existing relevant resolutions and decisions, identifying those that are inconsistent with the present resolution and relevant decisions, and propose which should be retired or repealed, to be presented by the RRIs Working Group at SC58 for approval.

The annex to the resolution contains a budget for the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative for 2019-2021, in response to a request by the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative.

World Wetlands Day: On Wednesday, the UAE introduced the draft resolution on World Wetlands Day (COP13 Doc.18.9), noting that the annual celebration of wetlands on 2 February supports efforts focusing on wetlands conservation.

Many supported the draft resolution, noting that official recognition by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) will increase the visibility of the Ramsar Convention, help raise public awareness of wetlands conservation, and strengthen synergies with other MEAs.

The UAE suggested he will work with the Secretariat and others to submit the draft resolution to the UNGA.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.9) the COP welcomes the celebration of World Wetlands Day in a growing number of countries and invites the UNGA to recognize 2 February, the date of adoption of the Ramsar Convention, as World Wetlands Day. The COP further invites parties and others to facilitate cooperation and information exchange in support of 2 February as World Wetlands Day.

Status of Ramsar Sites: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the draft resolution on the status of Sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance (COP13 Doc.18.10).

Many countries expressed support for the resolution, emphasizing the importance of parties' updating their Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) to avoid further wetland deterioration and noting the value of online information.

Austria, on behalf of the EU, suggested that parties should report and update their RIS regarding boundary changes that result from extensions or restrictions, in addition to changes of a technical nature.

Iran emphasized updating information as close as possible to COP meetings to accurately reflect parties' status updates. Ecuador said Annex 1 (Montreux Record questionnaire) should indicate management strategies and Ramsar Site administration by national, decentralized, or local communities.

Kenya, on behalf of the African Group, highlighted the need for information on trends in wetland size, as well as methods, techniques, and indicators for assessing and monitoring trends. Bolivia requested adding "environmental functions" to the reference to "ecological services" in Annex 1.

Noting gaps in reporting on changes in environmental conditions, and that RIS or maps for 69% of Ramsar Sites had not been submitted or updated for over six years, the Dominican Republic said the entire system lacks effectiveness and indicates a weakness that needs to be addressed.

Colombia requested including reference to specific earth observation organizations in text on initiatives on earth observation systems. The US said additional resources have been directed to bring its reporting up to date, noting closure of one of its Article 3.2 sites (change in ecological character) after abatement.

BirdLife International supported the resolution, emphasizing, *inter alia*: monitoring mechanisms for ecological character changes, including through Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAMs); and updating information on Sites on the Montreux Record. She described a development project in Australia with plans to degazette an area with important habitat for a population of far eastern curlews. Australia said there were no plans for degazetting and noted the project was subject to the environmental assessment process, including public consultation.

Liberia, Uganda, and Venezuela expressed the need for technical support to provide updated information, with South Sudan highlighting his country's lack of experts to conduct inventories. Plenary considered and adopted a revised draft on Sunday.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.10 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- appreciates designation of 131 new Ramsar Sites by parties between 28 August 2014 and 20 June 2018;
- notes that, for 1,592 Ramsar Sites, representing 69% of the 2,314 Ramsar Sites, either RIS or adequate maps had not been submitted, or relevant RIS or maps had not been updated for over six years;

- notes that substantive changes to Ramsar Site boundaries, arising from extensions or restrictions of the area of a Site, should also be reported in updated RIS;
- notes that 59% of parties reported they have arrangements in place to be informed of negative human-induced changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites, but that fewer than 42% have submitted reports of all instances of such changes or likely changes;
- urges parties that have not submitted a RIS or map for all Ramsar Sites they have designated, listed in the Secretary General's report on changes to the Ramsar List (COP13 Doc.12, Annex 3a), to provide such information in advance of SC57;
- instructs the Secretariat to contact the relevant parties to offer any necessary technical support;
- requests that parties listed in the Secretary General's report (COP13 Doc.12, Annex 3b) update, as a matter of urgency, the RIS at least once every six years;
- encourages parties to adopt and apply, as appropriate, as part of management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, a suitable assessment and monitoring regime; and
- instructs the Secretariat to develop protocols that would allow direct database-to-database transfer of data and information related to the RIS.

The resolution includes the Montreux Record questionnaire in Annex I.

Ramsar Advisory Missions: On Thursday, Burkina Faso, for the African Group, presented the draft resolution on RAMs (COP13 Doc.18.11), highlighting that an average of four advisory missions have been carried out each year, which is not enough given the challenges facing wetlands.

Algeria, Tunisia, Tanzania, Senegal, Libya, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Benin, Sudan, Uganda, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic supported the draft resolution. Several parties noted they had benefited from RAMs in the past. Guinea, Sudan, Uganda, Guatemala, and Mali stressed the need for RAMs in their countries.

Malaysia, Mexico, and the US said the RAMs should not be funded by allocations from the core budget. Japan, supported by Mexico, requested removal from the draft resolution of any reference to the core budget, stressing that funding aspects should be addressed by the Finance Subcommittee. Austria, for the EU, proposed allocating additional voluntary contributions for RAMs. The US noted that RAMs have never gone unfunded in the past, despite not being included in the core budget.

Libya proposed including a requirement to translate the outputs of a RAM into the local language of the country concerned.

The World Wide Fund for Nature emphasized the need to enhance RAMs through appropriate financing.

On Sunday, the plenary adopted revised text with a minor amendment.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.11 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties to consider requesting more frequent application of RAMs in their national territories;
- instructs the Secretariat, when considering RAMs, to prioritize the application of RAMs for those sites that are facing similar problems as other Ramsar Sites, where the RAM report may be of use for many other wetlands, or where the RAM can add value to existing knowledge on addressing challenges;
- instructs the Secretariat to prepare operational guidance for RAMs;

- instructs Ramsar National Focal Points from parties requesting RAMs to communicate with their national focal points from other conventions to identify opportunities to coordinate RAMs with other conventions' missions; and
- invites parties and others to consider making additional voluntary contributions to support RAMs.

In addition, the COP requests the Secretariat to:

- avoid duplication with other conventions' missions to the extent practicable, in responding to requests for RAMs;
- ensure that regional expertise is included in RAM teams;
- advise parties in their efforts to manage sites on the Montreux Record and sites for which reports on adverse change in ecological character have been received;
- promptly submit to the STRP all parties' requests for Ramsar Site removal from the Montreux Record and inform the contracting party and the SC of the STRP's recommendation on the disposition of such requests.

The resolution has one annex, which contains a list of topics to be included in the operational guidance for RAMs to be prepared by the Secretariat.

Future Implementation of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Aspects: On Thursday, STRP Chair Gardner presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.12), outlining its four annexes and noting that the technical paper in Annex 1 on restoration of degraded peatland soils to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity conservation is currently in draft form.

The UK, on behalf of the EU and Switzerland, suggested a process for timely planning of STRP work to maximize time availability. He noted that the process will clarify STRP priorities and identify additional tasks derived from the draft resolutions that can be realistically undertaken by the STRP in the next triennium. The US reiterated concerns expressed during SC52 regarding the ambition of the STRP work plan, noting that despite the "tremendous amount of work, not all tasks were covered." He called for an ambitious, but realistic, workplan.

New Zealand suggested focusing on evaluating priorities for a representative network of Ramsar Sites, and, with Ecuador, addressing emerging and critical drivers of wetlands loss and degradation. The US noted "some confusion on the thematic areas and priorities," suggesting amendments. Bolivia opined that the thematic areas should be revised to take into account different approaches by parties to environmental protection. China suggested adding a description of best practices for developing and implementing management plans, demonstration models, and restoration plans to provide technical guidelines for wetlands conservation and restoration.

Canada requested clarifications regarding submissions to IPBES, noting inconsistencies in the document. Belgium urged taking into account the short period available before IPBES 7. In response, Secretary General Rojas Urrego underscored close collaboration with the IPBES Secretariat.

Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela requested removal of the term "blue carbon," noting that no agreed international definition exists. Bolivia called for respecting definitions developed under relevant conventions.

Chile and Bolivia called for additional efforts for inclusion of scientists from the Latin American region to the STRP, underscoring language obstacles. The US proposed rotating the location of STRP meetings to foster greater participation and diversity, and scheduling one meeting back-to-back with an SC meeting for better coordination.

Ecuador asked for clarifications regarding the list of organizations invited to participate in STRP meetings, noting that a number of organizations from the Americas are not included.

Turkey reserved his position regarding the participation of the UN Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention as an observer for the next triennium.

A contact group met during the week. On Monday, the UK, on behalf of the EU and Switzerland, expressed satisfaction with the revised text, especially the provision to hold the third STRP meeting of the triennium in the region or country of the host of the forthcoming COP14. He highlighted necessary changes to STRP's *modus operandi* to increase efficiency and the need for a pilot approach based on experiences gained since COP12.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.12 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes the STRP products delivered during the last triennium;
- urges parties and others to use them, as appropriate;
- invites parties to use available CEPA tools to disseminate STRP products, and IOPs and others to promote and disseminate them, including the GWO;
- approves the priority thematic work areas for the STRP for the 2019-2021 triennium, the revised list of bodies and organizations to participate as observers in the STRP meetings and processes for the next triennium, and the guidelines for submitting proposals to IPBES; and
- instructs the STRP to develop a streamlined and achievable 2019-2021 work plan for approval at SC57, giving due consideration to including unfinished high- and low-priority tasks from the 2016-2018 work plan, and elements of the Strategic Plan that parties are struggling to implement.

The COP further requests:

- the STRP to review IPBES-related proposals submitted, and provide advice to the SC and the Secretariat to facilitate the process and submit any submission to IPBES in a timely manner;
- the Secretariat and the STRP, building on lessons learned, to test a new procedure for sequencing the STRP's work throughout the 2019-2021 triennium that maximizes time available to develop outputs and products for the COP; and
- the Secretariat to: schedule the second STRP meeting in conjunction with the second SC meeting, starting with SC58; hold the third STRP meeting of the triennium, subject to availability of funds, in the region or country of the host of COP14; and undertake activities to build the capacity of parties' national focal points and STRP and CEPA focal points, inviting parties and others to provide support.

The resolution contains four annexes. Annex 1 includes the list of STRP outputs produced during 2016-2018. Annex 2 contains the STRP priority thematic work areas for 2019-2021. Annex 3 lists the bodies and organizations invited to participate as observers in the meetings and processes of the STRP for the 2019-2021 triennium. Annex 4 includes the guidelines for developing requests to IPBES for its future work programmes.

Guidance on Identifying Peatlands as Ramsar Sites for Global Climate Change Regulation: On Thursday, STRP member Lars Dinesen (Denmark) presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.13), noting that the document: has incorporated comments by the SC; includes in Annex 1 revised guidelines for identifying and designating peatlands; and flags peatlands' importance as carbon sinks.

Germany for the EU, South Africa for the African Group, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Ecuador, the Philippines, and others supported the draft resolution. Belarus, Uruguay, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Ecuador outlined national and regional efforts to address peatland degradation.

The African Group stressed the need to address peatland under-representation in Ramsar Sites, drawing attention to peatlands in semi-arid areas that are dependent on groundwater flows. The EU highlighted the revised guidelines for peatland identification and designation. Belarus called for including quantitative and qualitative criteria to characterize peatlands as degraded.

Canada requested deletion of a paragraph recognizing that permafrost loss and overgrazing may act as significant factors of peatland degradation, noting they link two separate items on land-use change and consequences of human activities. The US offered suggestions to avoid prescriptive language and streamline the focus on peatlands.

The Philippines called for ensuring available funding, and supported the establishment of regional and global peatland inventories to assist monitoring and assessment, and formation of regional strategies. Colombia emphasized the importance of placing the discussion within the climate change framework and analyzing the provision of ecosystem services. Bolivia expressed concern about focusing solely on peatland carbon sequestration capacity, suggesting an integrated approach that examines the potential of peatlands to increase resilience of socio-economic systems.

The China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation underscored the need to recognize the importance of peatlands in Southeast Asia and tropical peatlands.

An informal working group met to resolve differences, and a revised draft resolution was adopted on Sunday, with minor amendments.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.13 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the revised guidelines for identifying and designating peatlands, found in Annex 1 to the resolution;
- urges parties to use the revised guidelines in their consideration of potential peatland Ramsar Sites, as appropriate; and
- encourages parties to use all available methods, including remote sensing, to help identify sites, as appropriate.

The resolution has two annexes. Annex 1 contains revised guidelines for identifying and designating peatlands, which replace and supersede Appendix E2 of the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, revised in 2012, as adopted by Resolution XI.8. Annex 2 contains a case study of designation of a peatland as a Ramsar Site using climate mitigation relevance as an additional argument, using the example of Lille Vildmose, Denmark.

Restoration of Degraded Peatlands: On Thursday, plenary considered the draft resolution on the restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity (COP13 Doc.18.14).

Germany, for the EU, and South Africa, for the African Group, along with Belarus and Mongolia, supported the draft resolution. The EU also proposed adding “reduce disaster risks” to the title of the draft resolution, noting that an important but neglected function of wetlands is water retention.

The African Group called for including references to peatlands in semi-arid regions, not just those in temperate and tropical climates.

Belarus suggested including a paragraph encouraging parties to develop or improve national legislation on peatland conservation, protection, and restoration.

Canada said requesting the STRP to develop appropriate guidance on integrating peatland restoration projects into NDCs is outside the scope of the Convention. The US noted that the STRP will review all requests made to it by the COP, to ensure they

are within its purview. New Zealand suggested inviting parties to consider how peatland restoration and conservation could contribute to implementing NDCs, rather than encouraging or urging parties to include peatlands in their NDCs.

On Sunday, plenary took up the revised draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.14 Rev.1). Austria reported that all parties had reached consensus on the revised draft, subject to several amendments, including adding several references to climate change adaptation. The draft resolution was approved as amended.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.14 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- urges parties to report, in their national reports, on progress regarding implementation of Resolutions VIII.17 (guidelines for global action on peatlands) and XII.11 (peatlands, climate change, and wise use);
- invites parties with peatlands to engage in the Global Peatlands Initiative;
- requests the STRP to consider further elaborating on practical experiences of restoration methods for peatland types not yet covered by Ramsar guidance;
- requests the STRP, in developing its proposed workplan for presentation at SC57, to consider making an assessment of the status of implementation of Resolution VIII.17, elaborating on the practical experiences of restoration methods based on the integrated approach to ecosystem restoration, developing guidance for the cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, and multiple criteria analysis of peatland restoration projects, and developing templates for reporting on peatland restoration;
- invites parties to provide peat-related information and case studies for inclusion in such guidance, and to disseminate outputs, and to report progress at COP14; and
- invites parties to consider options for developing and applying positive incentives to foster peatland restoration and conservation and to phase out incentives harmful to peatlands.

In addition, the COP encourages parties to:

- develop or improve legislation on restoration and rewetting of degraded peatlands, as well as on the protection and sustainable use of peatlands in general;
- conserve existing peatlands and to restore degraded peatlands in their territory;
- contribute to a compilation of experiences on peatland restoration and rewetting methods;
- consider stimulating the shift from drainage-based peatland agriculture and forestry, to rewetting followed by paludiculture (wet agriculture and forestry on peatlands) when identified as the best management option, and away from non-sustainable uses of peatlands, such as overgrazing and construction;
- seek to ensure that rewetting and paludiculture can take place where paludiculture is considered to be the best land use for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and restoration where biodiversity values are not compromised, taking into account the peatland type, the site’s present ecological status and the ecological potential after rewetting;
- foster collaboration and synergies among MEAs and to support an initiative to develop a joint declaration of MEAs with respect to peatland conservation, restoration, and wise use; and
- as appropriate within their national circumstances, pursue peatland conservation and/or restoration measures that reduce anthropogenic emissions and increase removals, as a way, *inter alia*, to contribute to their NDCs.

Promoting Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Management of Coastal Blue Carbon Ecosystems: On Thursday, Australia introduced the draft resolution on promoting conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal blue carbon ecosystems (COP13 Doc.18.15).

Algeria, for the African Group, along with Canada, Costa Rica, Malaysia, UAE, US, New Zealand, Philippines, Fiji, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Belgium, Bahrain, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported the draft resolution.

Austria, for the EU, welcomed the draft resolution but expressed doubt as to whether its “comprehensive” suggested tasks could all be dealt with due to limited resources.

Brazil, supported by Argentina and Bolivia, opposed the resolution, saying it has implications for the negotiations on the Paris rulebook and therefore interferes with the UNFCCC’s mandate. She emphasized, with Venezuela and Cuba, that wetlands should be protected, not turned into potential commodities, and said financing approaches that have environmental integrity already exist.

China called for more research and policymaking on blue carbon, and more support for CEPA, in particular to developing countries.

South Africa noted that freshwater abstraction, development pressures, and poor water quality are negatively affecting blue carbon ecosystems, in addition to dredging and land reclamation.

Malaysia expressed concern that the UNFCCC has not yet approved a methodology for blue carbon.

The Dominican Republic opposed using the term “blue carbon,” and noted that many of these ecosystems are already subject to restoration and protection under existing initiatives. Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, and Uruguay noted that the term “blue carbon” has not yet been defined multilaterally. Uruguay proposed using the term “coastal zones” instead.

Bolivia and Cuba stressed the need to include adaptation, not just mitigation, in the draft resolution. Belgium queried whether estuaries fall under the definition of blue carbon ecosystems. Peru underscored that the Convention aims to treat wetlands as ecosystems, not as individual components, whereas this draft resolution singles out carbon as one component of one type of wetland.

A contact group met on Friday and Sunday to discuss COP13 Doc.18.15 Rev.1. A further revised version (COP13 Doc.18.15 Rev.2) was then prepared.

On Sunday, the Czech Republic, in a paragraph that notes concern about the adverse impacts of agriculture, requested an amendment to instead note concern that the expansion of agriculture does not often include land use planning processes that incorporate evaluations of local soil, hydrology, and climatic conditions to assess how to maximize productivity while maintaining landscape functionality and species diversity.

Regarding a paragraph encouraging parties to review and, if appropriate, improve their respective programmes and policies to support of agricultural production, the US, opposed by New Zealand, called for deleting specific reference to funding policies. Mexico said the paragraph should encourage parties to review their subsidy programmes to include sustainability criteria.

Ecuador, supported by New Zealand and Colombia, highlighted that the text should refer to sustainable traditional practices, noting that many traditional practices are not sustainable.

Brazil called to list several other key drivers of wetland loss and degradation, in addition to agriculture.

Through further informal discussions delegates reached consensus. In plenary on Monday, delegates considered the revised draft resolution (COP13 Inf.10) for adoption. The COP approved the resolution, subject to an amendment from Ecuador to include a footnote in the Spanish translation referring to the definition of agriculture set by the FAO.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Inf.10) COP13 encourages parties with coastal blue carbon ecosystems in their territories to, *inter alia*:

- analyze data (including from citizen science and indigenous knowledge), map these ecosystems, and make this information publicly accessible with a view to, *inter alia*, estimating the carbon storage and fluxes of their coastal wetlands, and updating their national greenhouse gas inventories to better reflect data for wetlands;
- facilitate information sharing, among Ramsar Sites and other wetland sites with coastal blue carbon ecosystems, on the values and benefits of these ecosystems;
- apply the STRP’s developed or updated guidance to prioritize coastal blue carbon ecosystems and develop and implement plans for conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of these ecosystems, as appropriate; and
- maintain and restore coastal blue carbon ecosystems alongside coastal infrastructure to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts which detrimentally affect these ecosystems and lead to significant greenhouse gas emissions and reductions in ecosystem services.

In addition, the COP requests the Secretariat to, *inter alia*:

- survey interested contracting parties to determine their requirements in relation to managing coastal blue carbon ecosystems; and
- facilitate capacity building for interested contracted parties to apply the guidance under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, implement policies on conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems, and promote the establishment of regional training courses aimed to enhance knowledge and capacities of parties and to promote regional cooperation.

The COP also requests the STRP to consider continuing its work on climate change and wetlands, including coastal blue carbon ecosystems, as a high priority, consistent with the relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidelines, including by:

- undertaking a desktop study of coastal blue carbon ecosystems across the Ramsar Sites of those parties that express their interest in participating;
- reviewing and analyzing regional modelling of carbon stocks, greenhouse gas emissions, and carbon dynamics in coastal blue carbon ecosystems and providing information, as appropriate, to the IPCC to inform future updates to the IPCC Wetlands Supplement;
- developing guidance for prioritizing coastal blue carbon ecosystems for conservation and restoration; and
- reviewing and, as appropriate, updating existing guidance on the preparation of plans for conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal blue carbon ecosystems at Ramsar Sites.

The resolution contains a footnote stating that not all parties endorse the resolution’s definition of blue carbon – “The carbon captured by living organisms in coastal (e.g., mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrasses) and marine ecosystems and stored in biomass and sediments” – nor recognize the Convention as the competent forum to address mitigation reporting and accounting arrangements.

Cultural Values, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Wetlands: On Thursday, Tunisia presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.16), also on behalf of Burkina Faso and Senegal. She highlighted the vital importance of wetlands to human well-being, livelihoods, and food security, noting the existence of economically disadvantaged geographical zones that are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Tunisia, for the African Group, Slovenia, for the EU, New Zealand, Bolivia, and others supported the draft resolution.

Botswana, supported by Bolivia, suggested amending the draft resolution's title to reflect the cultural values and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and their contribution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. He stressed that not all cultural values and practices positively contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Lesotho highlighted the dependence of IPLCs on wetlands and proposed mainstreaming relevant work to achieve relevant socio-economic and environmental objectives.

South Africa suggested a paragraph encouraging parties to protect, support, and promote the use of cultural values, traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of IPLCs in adapting to the increasing impacts of climate change, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems.

Slovenia, for the EU, emphasized the link between the sustainability of human societies, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the significance of wetlands. She urged collaboration with relevant institutions, including the Ramsar cultural network, to maximize effectiveness. Turkey suggested replacing a reference reaffirming that water is a human right, with acknowledging the importance of equitable access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as an integral component of the realization of all human rights.

New Zealand encouraged focusing on case studies on how IPLCs' knowledge can improve wetland management and restoration. Canada suggested amendments to better reflect Article 7 of the Paris Agreement (global goal on adaptation) and called for inclusion of IPLCs in STRP meetings. The US offered amendments to soften the draft resolution's language and adjust some of the requests to the Secretariat and the STRP, noting requests should be subject to the availability of funds.

Uruguay, with Bolivia, suggested references to the most vulnerable communities to climate change impacts, and to the Adaptation Fund among other relevant financial institutions. Ecuador and Bolivia called for taking into account: relevant work under the CBD; the platform for exchanging experiences under the Paris Agreement; and traditional practices and knowledge. Chile queried the nature of requests to the STRP, noting that a contact group is currently addressing the timeline of STRP activities. Colombia suggested regular reporting on progress to the SC.

Secretary General Rojas Urrego noted that reporting requirements to the SC on the integration of cultural values should be directed to parties rather than the Secretariat, and asked for guidance on ways to further cooperate with the Ramsar cultural network.

An informal group met to resolve differences, and on Monday, the plenary adopted a revised draft without further amendment.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.16 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- emphasizes that environmental, social, and cultural solutions, including those of IPLCs, will be needed to achieve climate change targets, and innovative infrastructure and land-use

planning approaches, as appropriate, recognizing the key role that the Convention can play in making the necessary links;

- encourages parties and invites others to: protect, support, and promote the use of cultural values, traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of IPLCs in adapting to the increasing negative impacts of climate change; and promote policy guidelines and governance tools to incorporate IPLCs' knowledge into management plans for wetlands; and
- encourages parties to: seek mechanisms that allow the conservation and transmission of traditional knowledge of IPLCs in the sustainable use of natural resources with scientific advice; continue to promote cultural diversity and traditional knowledge systems and practices within wetlands as part of holistic approaches to the planning and implementation of relevant national and regional policies; and collaborate with IPLCs and relevant institutions in the development of activities for the prevention of forest degradation and deforestation, sustainable tourism and recreation activities, and other livelihood activities in wetlands and peatlands.

The COP further invites:

- parties to: include in their national reports to COP14 case studies that demonstrate how cultural diversity and traditional knowledge contribute to increasing resilience of wetlands to climate change; take into account the Platform of Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples established under the UNFCCC; and take into account the implementation of the present resolution when submitting mitigation and adaptation projects;
- the Ramsar Culture Network to continue its work as a mechanism to address wetland cultural issues, requesting the STRP to consider working with interested parties to develop terms of reference for the network to be considered at SC57;
- the STRP to consider reviewing and revising the Guidance: Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands, requesting the inclusion of indigenous representation in conducting the proposed work; and
- the Secretariat to continue to undertake enabling activities for the effective consideration of the cultural values of wetlands into wetland protection and management, inviting parties and others to do so.

Sustainable Urbanization, Climate Change, and Wetlands:

On Thursday, the UAE presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.17), highlighting: links to the Aichi Targets, SDGs, and climate change; stakeholder engagement; and the proposed role of the STRP for developing criteria and leading principles.

Costa Rica, Chile, Peru, the Philippines, Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana, Libya, South Africa, and others expressed support for the draft resolution.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, emphasized, *inter alia*: spatial planning; avoiding and mitigating impacts; nature-based solutions; and including reference to sustainable drainage.

Ecuador requested mention of the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C, and proposed language to recognize that local communities and wetland users are the main allies for wetland conservation.

Canada said the Paris Agreement should be recognized as a legal instrument distinct from the UNFCCC.

The Dominican Republic highlighted the value of wetlands for environmental education and public awareness. Botswana emphasized urban planning and spatial analysis to help maintain integrity of urban wetlands. Uganda and others described current approaches to address land use in wetlands.

Expressing concern about the many tasks proposed for the STRP, the US said these would be considered by the STRP

working group charged with reviewing all proposed resolutions that include STRP activities.

Delegates met informally to resolve discussions and on Sunday a revised text was adopted. The UAE reported that amendments to preambular text included reference to IPCC reports and the Ramsar Wetland Cities Accreditation initiative.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.17 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- urges parties to prevent activities that may have an adverse impact on urban and peri-urban wetlands;
- requests the STRP to develop technical guidelines for: design of urban and peri-urban Ramsar Sites using climate scenarios, climate modelling, and climate change analysis techniques; constructed urban and peri-urban water treatment wetlands; and setting limits for the pollutant loads that are discharged into urban wetlands, depending on its pollutant load capacity.

The COP also requests the STRP to provide the highest quality standard operating procedures for urban and peri-urban development or development adjacent to Ramsar wetlands; and develop guidelines for the wise use and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands and their buffer zones.

The COP encourages parties, as appropriate, to consider, *inter alia*:

- developing and implementing management plans for urban and peri-urban wetlands and periodically monitoring changes in wetlands;
- implementing constructed urban and peri-urban wetland habitat enhancement activity by integrating treatment systems that use biomimetic processes involving native wetland vegetation, soils, and their associated microbial assemblages;
- developing an urban and peri-urban wetlands inventory; and
- developing awareness and education programmes on conservation of urban and peri-urban wetlands.

Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services: On Friday, the Republic of Korea presented the draft resolution on developing an approach for the rapid assessment of wetland ecosystem services (COP13 Doc.18.18), highlighting its: applicability where wetland managers face resource limitations; flexibility across all wetland types; adaptability to local contexts; and usefulness for updating Ramsar Site information, and for planning and CEPA activities.

Thailand, Benin for the African Group, Austria for the EU, and many others supported the draft resolution. Malaysia, with Botswana, noted the need for capacity building and financial resources for implementation.

Bolivia noted that the approach should not be limited to ecosystem services and that other methodologies can be used, and expressed concern about potential commoditization of resources. Venezuela suggested changing the title to refer to “wetland ecosystem functions.” The Dominican Republic said the approach might limit effective assessment of services and benefits; and, with Ecuador, that each country should have flexibility to adapt it.

Peru, with Kenya and Costa Rica, said conducting an assessment doesn’t imply commoditization, but rather emphasizes the value of the resources. Austria, on behalf of the EU, emphasized that non-renewable ecosystem services should be excluded.

Canada noted the timeliness of the draft resolution, given the recent update to the IPBES reclassification scale, and, with Antigua and Barbuda, suggested reducing the classification system to three categories: positive, negative, and negligible. The Dominican Republic, Peru, Canada, Chile, and Cambodia stressed the approach should be voluntary. Indonesia emphasized

that the draft resolution should not impose additional reporting obligations.

India asked to include requesting the STRP to develop a method for using the assessment to determine medium and long-term changes. Oman requested including standards related to each country.

In response, the Republic of Korea emphasized that the tool is intended to be voluntary and noted an online training module is being developed.

Informal discussions took place on Sunday and Monday, but delegates were not able to reach full consensus on the text. On Monday, delegates adopted a revised text with brackets.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.18 Rev.1), bracketed text includes whether, *inter alia*:

- the rapid assessment approach is for wetland ecosystem [services] or [functions];
- parties [welcome] or [take note] of the approach; and
- the COP [acknowledges] or [takes note] of Annex 1 as an example of a voluntary assessment approach for evaluating the ecosystem [functions and] services of Ramsar Sites.

The COP further:

- calls on parties to volunteer to further develop the methodology in light of scientific and technical advances based on assessments of IPBES and other approaches;
- recognizes the long-term value of a participatory approach, involving IPLCs;
- encourages parties to promote the use of Ramsar communication tools by Ramsar Site management authorities to highlight more widely the ecosystem [functions] [services] provided by wetlands; and
- encourages parties, where appropriate, to utilize, or modify according to their visions and focus this approach and others for the rapid assessment of wetland ecosystem [functions and services] [functions] [services] or any similar approaches.

Annex 1 outlines the development and application of the rapid assessment approach with two appendices. Appendix 1 contains the rapid assessment of ecosystem services field assessment sheet, with bracketed text on which ecosystem services should be included.

Appendix 2 contains the initial list of wetland ecosystem services considered by the rapid assessment of ecosystem services approach and examples of the indicator questions.

Importance of Wetlands for Peace and Security: On Wednesday, Senegal introduced the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.19). He said addressing wetlands degradation will enhance security and strengthen resilience and human wellbeing, and cited various regional and international initiatives that include reference to the links between water, peace, and security. He emphasized that the intent was not to solve security issues but to highlight the value of services provided by wetlands.

Rwanda supported the resolution, noting the need for MEAs to work in harmony. France, supported by Ukraine, said he wanted to support the proposed resolution, but needed to consider its terms.

Brazil, supported by the Dominican Republic, Iran, Cuba, Turkey, Japan, Thailand, Colombia, and Belgium, said the proposed resolution is beyond the scope of the Convention. Senegal noted that other draft resolutions consider themes where measures have been taken by other MEAs, citing as examples links to UN-Habitat, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the World Health Organization, reiterating

the draft resolution's focus on the importance of wetlands for resilience of human communities.

Australia said the STRP does not have the capabilities or time to address these issues. The US and Canada agreed and offered to provide text to address concerns.

Discussions continued in a contact group on Wednesday and Friday, but parties were not able to reach consensus. During plenary on Sunday, Senegal said the concept would be presented at SC59. On Monday, the draft resolution was withdrawn.

Gender and Wetlands: On Friday, Colombia presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.20), underscoring that historically there have been multiple forms of discrimination against women, including on environmental matters. She stressed that many conventions and agreements, including the UNFCCC, CBD, and UN Convention to Combat Desertification, have gender plans, emphasizing that the issue is “a matter of justice and rights, and very important for sustainable development.”

Finland for the EU, Uganda for the African Group, along with the US, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, the UAE, Japan, the Philippines, Peru, and Cuba supported the draft resolution. Malaysia took note of the document, stating that gender issues are not significant nationally, especially on wetland management.

The African Group, Costa Rica, the UAE, Ecuador, the Philippines, Peru, and Cuba highlighted national, regional, and international efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Dominican Republic called for addressing the incorporation of gender perspectives in the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024, and for balanced gender representation in national delegations. Ecuador requested reference to SDG 5 (gender equality); called for recognizing the need to include the gender perspective in all levels of participation and decision making; and suggested encouraging parties to find empowerment mechanisms for women in local communities, bearing in mind women's leadership in fishing, shell collection, and mangrove cultivation, among others.

India suggested requesting the STRP to prepare an inventory of relevant gender tools, and congratulating women who significantly contribute to wetland conservation. Chile emphasized the cross-cutting nature of women's contributions to wetland protection. South Africa underscored the need to include gender considerations in planning, implementation, and research initiatives. Niger called for extending the draft resolution's scope to include young and elderly people.

The EU suggested amendments encouraging: a balanced representation of women and men in national delegations and as chairs or facilitators of formal and informal negotiating groups; consideration of conditions that will enable balanced gender participation in the Ramsar Convention; and consideration of how wetland communication material can address gender balance. She requested deleting a request to the Secretariat to assist parties in strengthening their national statistics systems to improve incorporation of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in their national reports, due to the many tasks assigned to the STRP.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggested references to the gender transformative perspective and capacity building, urging the use of existing tools, including those developed by UNESCO.

Delegates forwarded comments to the Secretariat and Colombia, and plenary adopted a revised decision on Sunday.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.20 Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia* requests that:

- the COP include, as part of the process for the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, ways in which parties might mainstream a gender perspective in the Convention's implementation;
- the STRP analyze the benefits to wetland management and wise use that derive from taking a gender perspective, develop guidance on how to integrate gender issues, and submit proposals to the COP; and
- the Secretariat: conduct mandatory training for all staff regarding gender equality and mainstreaming, designating a lead expert on gender issues; explore means by which it can generate aspirational goals and report back to COP14; support parties, upon request, to strengthen their national statistics systems to improve the incorporation of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in their national reports; and prepare a synthesis report on the gender-relevant and sex-disaggregated information.

The COP encourages the Secretariat to support parties to:

- mainstream a gender perspective in their implementation of the Convention, in particular with respect to the Strategic Plan and the CEPA programme implementation, and the Secretariat to support this effort, including through financial and non-financial resources;
- give due consideration to a balanced gender representation among representatives within each region and in the Convention's bodies; and
- include, where applicable, sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in their national reports, taking into account SDGs information.

The COP further invites parties to: in collaboration with the Secretariat, train and raise awareness on issues related to gender and wetlands, strengthen the skills and capacity of delegates to achieve equal participation of women and men in Ramsar Convention meetings; and consider increasing the participation and representation of women in their national delegations and as chairs/facilitators of formal and informal negotiating groups.

Agriculture in Wetlands: On Friday, the Czech Republic introduced the draft resolution on agriculture in wetlands (COP13 Doc.18.21). He noted that many wetlands have been drained for agriculture, and emphasized the need to acknowledge the connections between wetlands, agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, and extreme weather events such as floods.

Many supported the draft resolution.

Argentina, supported by Brazil and Chile, said the emphasis placed on agriculture is excessive, stressing the importance of looking at all activities that impact on wetlands, and urged using language that covers certain inadequate practices, rather than agriculture as a whole. Brazil and Panama called for the recognition of sustainable agriculture in wetlands. Indonesia highlighted that the potential of paludiculture should be recognized in the draft resolution.

Myanmar, on a paragraph requesting the STRP to provide data on and an overview of the extent of intact wetlands and those damaged and destroyed since the 1970s, said this duplicates an existing priority task for the STRP over the next triennium. The Netherlands, on behalf of the EU, stressed the need to strengthen CEPA activities in local communities.

The Dominican Republic suggested adding acknowledgement that tourism development is a key driver in wetland loss and degradation. Colombia highlighted that wetlands can be a tourist attraction. Ecuador suggested an additional paragraph regarding land management for the protection of wetlands.

New Zealand called for a stronger emphasis on protecting wetlands and maintaining their ecological character. Supported by Australia, he suggested the title be changed to “agriculture and

wetlands,” rather than “agriculture in wetlands.” The Philippines suggest changing the title to “use of wetlands for agriculture,” stressing there are wetlands that are agricultural in nature, for example fish ponds and rice paddies.

Australia, supported by India, said text requesting the Secretariat to advise on withdrawing subsidies that endanger wetlands is too difficult to implement and would put the Secretariat in the position of criticizing practices of individual countries. The US emphasized that all provisions of the draft resolution regarding subsidies are outside the Convention’s mandate. Uruguay said parties are sovereign in terms of subsidies.

Thailand stressed the need to invite parties to share lessons learned and best practices on a voluntary basis, including through national reports.

South Africa highlighted that IPLCs depend on the cultivation of wetlands through drainage for daily subsistence and require alternative methods of growing food. Rwanda suggested including a paragraph on alternative livelihoods.

Following informal discussions on a revised draft, the COP adopted the resolution on Monday, with an amendment. Ecuador requested adding a footnote in the Spanish translation referring to the definition of agriculture set by the FAO, which was approved.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.21 Rev.2) the COP encourages parties to, *inter alia*:

- develop sustainable agricultural practices that promote the conservation of wetlands by discouraging further wetland drainage and properly managing aquifers, enhancing water retention time in the landscape, recreating local atmospheric water cycles, and contributing to climate change mitigation and the alleviation of adverse impacts of droughts, as well as reducing peak water discharges coupled with high nutrient and organic matter runoff;
- identify and support traditional as well as innovative uses of wetlands and their biodiversity, while maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, and to search for and promote novel uses of wetlands;
- support and develop guidance tools for the co-management of wetlands, other surface water resources and ground water resources;
- review and, if appropriate, improve their respective programmes and policies in support of agricultural production, and to assess their effects on wetlands and their sustainability, including the integrity of wetlands and long-term impact upon the sustainability of local livelihoods;
- adapt incentive schemes to consider criteria for sustainable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, and prevention of degradation of wetland-related ecosystems; and
- in their National Reports, assess the relevant domestic legislative, regulatory, and wetland protection policy frameworks for their effectiveness and comprehensiveness to ensure that wetlands in highly intensive agricultural landscapes have necessary and adequate protection.

The COP also requests the STRP to:

- compile and review information on the positive and negative impacts of agricultural practices on wetlands in terms of their biodiversity and ecosystem services, and document best practice examples of wetland use for agricultural production that preserves wetland integrity and is sustainable in the long term and in the context of climate change; and
- provide data on, and an overview of, the extent of intact agricultural wetlands and those damaged and destroyed through conversion to agricultural land-uses since the 1970s.

Intertidal Wetlands and Ecologically Associated Habitats:

On Friday, the Philippines introduced the draft resolution on conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats (COP13 Doc.18.22). She noted it aims to strengthen international cooperation by exploring how synergies and collaboration among relevant fora can raise the profile of intertidal wetlands. She also stressed that the activities included in the draft resolution will not place additional burdens on the core budget, emphasizing voluntary financing and use of existing resource mobilization mechanisms.

Austria for the EU, South Africa for the African Group, Costa Rica, the UAE, Norway, Cuba, the Republic of Korea, Oman, Ukraine, Honduras, China, Bahrain, the US, Japan, Australia, Ecuador, and Sri Lanka supported the draft resolution. China, the UAE, Sri Lanka, Libya, and others outlined relevant national and regional conservation efforts.

Norway, the UK, Colombia, FAO, and BirdLife International supported the establishment of a global coastal forum to assist with implementation. The UK stressed the forum will help raise the profile of “coastal littoral wetlands” and associated habitats, underscoring the need for appropriate mechanisms, including funding tools. Canada noted she will explore opportunities to engage if the forum is established. The US and Australia expressed concern about potential budgetary implications.

The EU, supported by Ukraine and opposed by Bahrain, suggested amending the draft resolution’s title to refer to coastal littoral wetlands, noting that the term “intertidal” excludes coasts not subject to tides. He also called for referencing the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds. Bahrain proposed referring to “coastal wetlands, especially the intertidal zones.”

The African Group suggested: adding rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification to sea level rise, regarding climate change related anticipated results, with Cuba; and emphasizing intertidal and adjacent habitats connectivity.

Norway and Canada suggested amendments to ensure consistency with the Paris Agreement. Canada proposed encouraging parties to promote the role of their coastal ecosystems with ecosystem-based adaptation. The US offered amendments to address geographical imbalance in parts of the draft resolution and soften prescriptive language.

The UAE, Oman, and Bahrain highlighted the Arabian Peninsula Waterbird Monitoring Strategy. The Republic of Korea requested including relevant requests of the IUCN Resolution on the Conservation of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea.

Honduras highlighted the importance of a collaborative framework with other conventions. Cuba, opposed by Australia and Oman, requested deletion of reference to blue carbon. Oman offered amendments to safeguard wetlands from aquaculture activities. India suggested ensuring that restoration efforts, for example for mangroves, do not ultimately convert mudflats and intertidal wetlands, which play important roles as breeding and staging grounds for waterbirds.

BirdLife International, also on behalf of Wetlands International and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, stressed the need to embed crucial coastal habitats in the 2030 Agenda.

On Monday, the Philippines noted that following the submission of the revised draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.22 Rev.1) additional suggestions for amendments had been received (COP13 Inf.11). Delegates addressed the relevant documents and adopted the resolution without further amendments.

Final Resolution: The final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.22 Rev.1, with final amendments included in COP13 Inf.11) addresses coordination with other initiatives and conservation frameworks, site designation, management, other solutions, restoration, and changing attitudes to coastal wetlands.

On coordination with other initiatives and conservation frameworks, the COP:

- encourages parties to consider the inclusion of their coastal ecosystems in their national policies and strategies for climate mitigation and promote their role within ecosystem-based adaptation;
- requests the Secretariat to explore actively with other MEAs, governments, the private sector, relevant organizations, and other stakeholders, subject to the availability of funds, the possibility to set up a multi-stakeholder global coastal forum to facilitate the protection, management, and restoration of coastal ecosystems; and
- encourages parties and the STRP to consider actively participating in the proposed coastal forum.

On site designation, the COP encourages:

- parties to urgently designate intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats of international importance;
- parties with qualifying intertidal sites to consider them for nomination as Ramsar Sites, including transboundary sites, as a means to potentially form ecologically-connected site networks with other key sites; and
- parties to ensure that intertidal Ramsar Site boundaries include the entire ecosystem of importance to migratory waterbirds and other dependent species, inviting them to review and extend boundaries of relevant Ramsar Sites, as appropriate.

The COP further:

- invites parties that are range states to the East Asian–Australasian Flyway and the West Asia/East Africa flyway to enhance efforts and collaboration to improve population size estimates for waterbirds; and
- requests the Secretariat and the STRP to summarize the extent of new intertidal wetland Ramsar Site designations for succeeding COPs.

Regarding management, the COP requests the STRP, subject to the availability of resources, to consider coordinating with the scientific subsidiary bodies of other MEAs, under the proposed coastal forum, to develop guidance on the conservation, wise use, and management of sustainable “Working Coastal Habitats.”

On other solutions, the COP encourages parties to:

- fully recognize the international importance of their intertidal and associated coastal wetlands for biodiversity and ecosystem services and reconsider mudflat conversion at priority sites for biodiversity as a precautionary approach;
- ensure that they follow Ramsar’s Integrated Framework and guidelines for avoiding, mitigating, and compensating for wetland losses when considering development impacting on intertidal and coastal wetlands;
- address and reverse perverse incentives to convert intertidal wetlands and ecologically associated habitats, and to implement sustainable coastal wetland-friendly measures;
- ensure that coastal sediment and water needs from riverine inputs are maintained through the appropriate regulation of outflows from dams or other water regulation structures through the implementation of Ramsar’s guidance on environmental flows;
- make publicly available information about their practical experiences with coastal conservation interventions;

- support and participate in an assessment of the state of the region’s coastal wetlands, together with other range states of the Arabian Peninsula; and
- employ coastal and marine spatial planning tools to better manage conflicts in multi-use coastal areas, and to promote conservation objectives.

Regarding restoration, the COP encourages parties in areas where coastal erosion and/or sea-level rise result in losses of intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats to implement programmes of managed retreat of coastal defenses.

On changing attitudes to coastal wetlands, the COP:

- encourages parties to consider, as appropriate, the development of programmes and initiatives to communicate the importance of intertidal wetlands and associated habitats to the public and other stakeholders;
- encourages interested parties and others to create a network of experts in waterbird and wetland monitoring in the Arabian Peninsula; and
- requests parties give due consideration to the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats in drafting the post-2024 Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Annexed to the document is a list of previous resolutions relevant to the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands.

Conservation and Management of Small Wetlands: On Friday, China introduced the draft resolution on conservation and management of small wetlands (COP13 Doc.18.23). He underscored that small wetlands provide important ecosystem services, and are under extreme pressure due to climate change and human factors. He noted difficulty in defining their size, and said guidelines need to be developed with guidance from the STRP and all parties.

Lesotho for the African Group, Finland for the EU, the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Oman, Thailand, India, Iran, Mexico, Chile, Canada, Grenada, Colombia, the US, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Republic of Korea, Honduras, UNESCO, and FAO supported the draft resolution.

The African Group said the definition of a small wetland needs to be clarified. Jordan and Colombia urged setting clear criteria. India and Bahrain said the STRP should develop such criteria.

The Dominican Republic and Colombia encouraged financial and technical support for, *inter alia*, development of management plans for small wetlands.

Thailand requested the Secretariat to collect scientific information on the conservation and management of small wetlands, and Bangladesh requested Secretariat assistance in initiating a regional initiative on the identification and conservation of small wetlands.

Ecuador noted that countries do not always have detailed information about small wetlands and regular reporting can be complex.

UNESCO suggested adding a reference to SDG 14. The FAO suggested referring to SDG 2 (food security).

Following interventions from delegates, a Friends of the Chair group met to resolve differences. Plenary adopted revised text on Monday with minor amendments.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.23 Rev.1) the COP, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties to urgently address human-induced pressures that threaten small wetlands, through promulgation of national and regional policy, and other effective measures such as water management planning or spatial planning to prevent further loss of small wetlands;

- encourages parties to include small wetlands in their science-based inventories, national wetland strategies, and national and regional land use plans;
- invites parties to explore ways to find additional funding targeted to the effective management, restoration, and implementation of conservation for small wetlands;
- invites parties to designate small wetlands and small wetland complexes, that meet the relevant criteria, for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
- invites parties to report on the conservation of small wetlands in their territory in their Ramsar national reports; and
- requests the STRP, in developing its proposed work plan for presentation at SC57, to consider preparing guidance on the identification of small wetlands and their multiple values for biodiversity conservation especially in the context of landscape management and climate change, and to draw representative examples from each of the Ramsar regions highlighting a range of different legislative, policy, and other best practice approaches.

Wetlands in West Asia: On Friday, Iraq presented the draft resolution on wetlands in West Asia (COP13 Doc.18.24), and stressed enhanced collaboration and coordination, encouraging knowledge and information sharing among parties to address wetland deterioration.

Jordan, Bahrain, and Lebanon supported the draft resolution, urging regional collaboration and information sharing.

Turkey and Iran opposed the draft resolution. Turkey noted that the draft resolution: places water issues at the core of the Ramsar Convention, not giving equal footing to other matters; requires broader geographical coverage; attempts to insert bilateral issues, which will be counterproductive; and discusses transboundary water issues that are outside the scope of the Ramsar Convention and can only be solved among riparian countries. Iran stressed that, following several rounds of bilateral negotiations prior to COP13, no agreement on the text was reached.

Malaysia took note of the draft resolution as a platform to raise awareness on wetlands in the region. The US and Canada offered amendments to “clarify wording and soften the draft resolution’s language.”

Oman and Azerbaijan suggested that Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and other interested parties work on the draft resolution to achieve consensus.

Informal discussions ensued to resolve differences, and plenary adopted a revised draft. Turkey recorded his reservation to parts of the resolution, including a paragraph underscoring the great importance of ensuring the conservation and wise use of wetlands in West Asia, and encouraging cooperation among parties in the region in this respect.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.24 Rev.1), the COP encourages:

- parties in West Asia to cooperate in the wise use of wetlands and to consider leveraging existing collaboration and regional initiatives within the context of sustainable development; and
- greater cooperation among parties in the region, IOPs and related organizations to promote awareness of the importance of the region’s wetlands and make practical efforts for their conservation and wise use.

The COP further requests:

- parties in the West Asia region to carry out restoration of wetland ecosystem services; and
- the Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia to follow up the provisions of the present resolution and report back to the COP.

Wetlands in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic: On Wednesday, Sweden presented the draft resolution (COP13 Doc.18.25), noting that, following consultations, references to the Antarctic Treaty, the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic region, and protected areas have been deleted.

Argentina and Colombia called for maintaining the scope of application of the Ramsar Convention and, with Chile and Ecuador, respecting the mandate of other instruments such as the Antarctic Treaty. New Zealand noted that some recommendations in the draft resolution duplicate discussions under the Antarctic Treaty. South Africa, for the African Group, supported deletion of references to the Antarctic Treaty and highlighted potential biosecurity issues in polar and subpolar wetlands.

Denmark urged taking into account relevant work on wetlands by other bodies, supported by Japan, and suggested deleting references to protected areas and inserting references to Ramsar Sites. She expressed concern on new assessments and inventories of Arctic wetlands, noting that such an exercise is extremely time- and resource-intensive.

Norway, the US, the UK, Australia, and Japan suggested focusing on the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions and requested deletion of references to the Antarctic and the Antarctic Treaty. Norway cautioned against the designation of Ramsar Sites or protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Canada called for ensuring linkages between the proposed activities and deleting activities that fall outside the relevant mandates of listed organizations.

Sweden, supported by many, suggested the establishment of a working group to present the changes in detail and hold further discussions. On Monday, plenary adopted a revised draft, without further amendment.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.25 Rev.1), on knowledge and awareness, COP13 encourages the concerned parties to, *inter alia*:

- obtain sufficient data about Arctic and sub-Arctic wetlands to take necessary measures for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;
- undertake assessments of the state of Arctic and sub-Arctic wetlands, to include hotspot analyses for wetland biodiversity, and gaps in the network of Ramsar Sites and other protected areas including wetlands; and
- raise awareness of the biodiversity, ecosystem services, and socio-economic importance of Arctic and sub-Arctic wetlands.

On Ramsar Sites and other wetlands of high conservation value, the COP encourages the concerned parties to designate new Ramsar Sites within their territories that comprise under-represented wetland types and/or important links in flyways and other migratory routes.

On wise use and mitigation of impact on wetlands and restoration, the COP encourages concerned parties to:

- seek to ensure that restoration measures in wetlands in the Arctic and sub-Arctic are prioritized and undertaken to improve the connectivity between habitats;
- seek to ensure that analysis of the impacts of development projects, transportation, and tourism activities are undertaken to support parties’ efforts to maintain the ecological character of wetlands;
- where there are herds of domestic or semi-domestic grazing animals in Arctic or sub-Arctic areas, work with stakeholders to ensure that herd population size is kept at a level that does not affect wetland populations of wild grazing animals; and
- seek to put in place measures to eradicate existing invasive alien species and prevent the future spread of existing and new invasive alien species in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions.

On international cooperation, the COP requests the Secretariat to share with the UNFCCC information on relevant activities under the Ramsar Convention.

Enhanced Conservation of Sea Turtle Areas and Designation of Key Areas as Ramsar Sites: On Thursday, France and Senegal introduced the draft resolution on enhanced conservation of sea turtle breeding, feeding, and nursery areas, and the designation of key areas as Ramsar Sites (COP13 Doc.18.26). France outlined suggested revisions in the document, drawing attention to sea turtle habitat conservation and encouraging the development of eco-tourism.

Many supported the draft resolution. South Africa, for the African Group, underscored the importance of the draft resolution for the region, noting that no global international agreement on sea turtles exists, which makes the draft resolution increasingly relevant to the conservation of sea turtle species.

New Zealand, on behalf of Oceania, as well as Myanmar, Benin, Costa Rica, Thailand, Oman, Viet Nam, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Panama, Libya, Seychelles, Guinea Bissau, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Cuba, and Indonesia reported on national and regional efforts to protect and conserve sea turtles and their habitats.

Argentina, the US, Honduras, Brazil, and Panama highlighted the need for cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), including renewal of the relevant memorandum of understanding.

Benin, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, US, Honduras, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Libya requested amendments to Annex 1 of the draft resolution (existing Ramsar Sites with coastal and marine sea turtle habitats) to better portray national realities. Canada called for grouping the countries in the annex according to the Ramsar regions.

The Dominican Republic emphasized regional and global instruments and mechanisms that address sea turtle conservation, including CITES, IAC, the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention), and the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), urging better implementation.

Ecuador requested deleting the reference to sea turtle nursery areas in the draft resolution's title, noting that all wetlands can be considered nursery areas. Thailand suggested preparing guidelines on sea turtle habitat conservation. Venezuela suggested including reference to increased mortality rates of sea turtles due to numerous reasons, including invasive alien species and unsustainable management of nesting sites. India underscored the need to devise new research methodologies and highlighted, with Kuwait, the need for international collaboration, noting that "sea turtles breed at one place, but travel to another."

The CMS Secretariat urged the use of existing instruments, including relevant CMS memoranda of understanding, and the development of programmes for eco-tourism.

On Sunday, the plenary adopted a revised draft without amendment.

Final Resolution: In the final resolution (COP13 Doc.18.26 Rev.1), the COP stresses the urgent need to take the required measures to reduce threats to nesting areas and to develop best practices to guide the interaction of humans and marine turtles, and encourages parties to:

- identify index nesting and foraging sites and ensure the populations are monitored;

- strengthen the conservation and management of those identified index nesting and foraging sites, and, if possible, to designate them as Ramsar Sites and strengthen this designation through the promulgation of the appropriate protective measures, in particular the creation of marine protected areas, as appropriate;
- develop and implement management plans for these sites, and integrate these site management plans with coastal zone management plans;
- consult each other, and other relevant work to protect habitats in networks;
- promote the wise use of wetlands with marine turtle habitats by working with local communities, stakeholders, and relevant institutions to raise awareness, and halt poaching and exploitation of by-products, including through fostering alternative sustainable livelihoods; and
- review their Ramsar Site management plans to ensure they include marine turtle conservation actions, recommending enhancing synergies with regional initiatives and existing networks rather than establishing new arrangements.

The COP further urges parties to undertake collaborative research on impacts of climate change on marine turtles and their wetland habitats, and requests:

- the STRP to consider developing rapid assessment methods to assess climate vulnerability for presentation at SC57; and
- the Secretariat to work with the Secretariats of the IAC, the CMS, and their relevant Memoranda of Understanding to enhance marine turtle conservation in Ramsar Sites, and collaborate with parties to include, where possible, marine turtle conservation actions in their Ramsar Site management plans.

Annexed to the resolution is a list of existing Ramsar Sites with coastal and marine turtle habitats per region.

Closing Plenary

On Monday, 29 October, COP13 Alternate President Mohamed Saif Al Afkham introduced the final report of the meeting, which was adopted with the understanding that the report of the final day would be added by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat noted that no official offer to host COP14 in 2021 had been received. Senegal offered to host, subject to official confirmation to take place through diplomatic channels, and plenary agreed to extend the deadline to the month before the next SC meeting in 2019.

Uruguay introduced a resolution (COP13 Doc.18.27) expressing appreciation to and congratulating the UAE for hosting a successful COP13, noting, *inter alia*: the meeting was the first Ramsar COP in Western Asia; the significant effort required to host more than 1,000 participants; and the warm hospitality. Delegates adopted the resolution.

Youth Engaged in Wetlands called on parties and all stakeholders to empower youth to actively participate in wetland issues, including policy making, and proposed as the theme for COP14 "Youth in Wetlands."

The Ramsar International Organization Partners said they were committed to communicating the COP13 outcomes at upcoming CBD and UNFCCC meetings.

Many thanked the hosts, the Secretariat, and parties.

COP13 President Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi thanked parties for their team spirit and constructive discussions. He highlighted that earlier in the day UAE had announced two new conservation areas, one of which will be submitted as a Ramsar Site, and gavelled COP13 to a close at 4:36 pm.

A Brief Analysis of COP13

The world's wetlands are in peril. "Since 1970, 35% of wetlands have been lost, three times the rate of forest loss, and 81% of inland wetland species populations and 36% of coastal and marine species have declined." These stark reminders from the Global Wetland Outlook (GWO), noted by both Ramsar Secretary General Martha Rojas Urrego and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) Chair Royal Gardner, leave little space for misinterpretation. In addition, as delegates repeatedly recalled throughout the week, wetlands provide important services as a source and purifier of water, a protective barrier from floods and droughts, a provider of food, fiber, and fuel, a hotspot for biodiversity, a natural carbon storage facility, and a regulator of climate and hydrological regimes. The "wake-up call" of the GWO shaped the way delegates approached their work at COP13.

The urgency of addressing the immense pressures that wetlands face was repeatedly highlighted during COP13, which focused on finding ways to increase the Convention's reach, effectiveness, and efficiency by addressing its internal structure, its outward activities, and ways to mainstream wetland conservation and wise use in other domains. This was particularly evident in a series of resolutions addressing the Convention's governance, and its implementation, visibility, and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and providing clear links with climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This brief analysis will address the main outcomes of COP13 together with the primary challenges that the Convention faces in a changing international environment.

What's Old is New. What's New is New.

Ramsar, the oldest of the modern global intergovernmental environmental agreements, finds itself in a changing international environment. Since COP12 in Uruguay three years ago, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change were adopted. The momentum these instruments provide gives Ramsar the challenge and opportunity to raise the profile of wetlands and, by linking to the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and other MEAs, to expand the tools at its disposal to achieve its core mission: conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Heading into COP13, some expressed concern about the Convention and its Secretariat. The organizational problems at the previous COP, coupled with issues about previous management, made many wonder whether a major restructuring is necessary to refocus and rejuvenate. However, the radical reshuffling of the Secretariat, with new staff in top positions, including the Secretary General, left most delegates more hopeful about the future. During the closing plenary, many praised the fresh composition of the Secretariat, with comments on "restoring parties' confidence," "providing leadership in challenging times," and "increased cohesion and sets of skills." While criticism was not absent, especially on the Secretariat's relative lack of experience, or on forfeiting valuable institutional knowledge and memory, the overall feeling was optimistic and the proceedings at COP13, compared to COP12, were productive and forward-looking.

Making a Splash – COP13's Major Outcomes

The sheer amount of work done over the last triennium, especially by the STRP, but also by the Standing Committee, the Secretariat, and under the Convention's programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation, and awareness (CEPA) left many participants impressed. When

prompted to identify the single most important outcome of the meeting, delegates almost unanimously pointed to the publication of the GWO.

The GWO is the first-ever comprehensive report on the state of the world's wetlands and their services to people. It provides a snapshot of wetland status, trends, and pressures. The GWO undoubtedly paints a grim picture of the world's wetlands, solidifying our increasingly accurate knowledge of global wetland area data. The report highlights that wetlands, although still covering a global area almost as large as Greenland, are declining fast. It underscores that the quality of remaining wetlands is also suffering and that many wetland-dependent species face high levels of extinction threats. The GWO also stresses the negative trends in water quality and emphasizes that wetland ecosystem services are enormous, far outweighing those of terrestrial ecosystems.

Still, as STRP Chair Gardner repeatedly noted, these facts don't tell the entire story. The GWO further articulates a broad range of effective wetland conservation options available at the national, international, catchment, and site levels, underscoring the need for good governance, knowledge generation, management, investment, and public participation. Regarding immediate, tangible results, the GWO has already raised public awareness, as evidenced by the impressive response on social media, elevating the Convention's profile and making links with other MEAs, especially the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Addressing the linkages between climate change and wetlands is, as one long-time observer pointed out, a sign that the Convention is changing with the times. As repeatedly heard in plenary, wetlands not only play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, but are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. Still, the question of how to enhance interlinkages without overstepping the Ramsar Convention's mandate proved difficult. For example, a proposal that parties to the Ramsar Convention should be encouraged to include wetland-related information in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement faced resistance, with opponents highlighting that NDCs should focus on greenhouse gas emissions reductions only, and cautioning against prejudging the outcome of current negotiations on the Paris Agreement Work Programme. In the end, language relating to NDCs was considerably softened. Some questioned whether this was a missed opportunity, while one seasoned delegate saw this step, albeit small, as "opening the door" to further enhancing synergies in the future.

Many highlighted as an important achievement for supporting climate change mitigation the adoption of revised guidelines for identifying and designating peatlands to the Ramsar List. Unlike the resolution on NDCs, the proposal was not considered to overlap with the Paris Agreement because it focuses specifically on the Ramsar List. The resolution provides guidance on using the importance of peatlands for climate change mitigation as an additional argument to support the designation of peatlands as "Wetlands of International Importance." These guidelines were adopted with relatively little discussion. In contrast, the resolution on blue carbon proposed by Australia proved "extremely politically sensitive," in the words of one delegate. It encountered protracted opposition, with delegates working into the final hours to reach agreement. The resolution was adopted with a footnote that not all parties to the Convention accept the concept of blue carbon. Although this may be another small step forward to integrate climate change-related matters in wetland conservation, some delegates observed Ramsar still has some way to go.

Delegates also highlighted the interlinkages between Ramsar and the SDGs. As many noted, not only is the Convention a co-custodian with UNEP of SDG indicator 6.6.1 (water-related ecosystems), but wetlands contribute directly or indirectly to 75 SDG indicators. This places Ramsar in a privileged position, providing a unique platform to foster collaboration and generate co-benefits. It simultaneously offers a great opportunity to raise its profile and gain momentum in the battle against time to save one of the most biologically productive ecosystems on Earth.

In Deep Water – Main Challenges for the Convention

Many expected the discussions on governance to be controversial in the lead up to COP13. Most delegates seemed to agree on the need to restructure the Convention's work, including retiring a number of outdated working groups. Still, different views emerged on how to formalize a process that will produce the desired outcome of greater efficiency, including for some delegates, more focus on substance over administration. Some suggested drastic institutional changes, which others compared to "open heart surgery, before a diagnosis on whether the patient is sick." Yet others taking a more moderate position emphasized that "we have known for a long time that the patient is sick," stressing, however, the need for "proper stocktaking before surgery."

Following deliberations, COP13 decided to retire the Transition Committee and the working groups on the CEPA programme, facilitation, the language strategy, resource mobilization, and staffing. The COP further established an Effectiveness Working Group to review the governance structure of the Convention with the assistance of an independent consultant, recommend revisions that further enhance the Convention's effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and propose a process for implementation. A final decision on these governance issues will be taken at COP14.

An even lengthier discussion surfaced during deliberations on the resolution addressing the responsibilities of the Standing Committee, especially on the role of the Executive Team, comprised of the President, Vice-President, and Chair of the Finance Committee. Two distinct perspectives emerged. Some noted that the Executive Team has no mandate, suggesting it be replaced by a body with regional representation to increase transparency. Others opposed, underscoring the team's importance as a supporting and oversight role for the Secretariat. The final decision, a compromise eloquently proposed in plenary by the UK, retains the Executive Team and requests it to define its terms of reference for approval by the Standing Committee.

Other problems the Convention faces are more long-standing. The lack of a specific funding mechanism has long been highlighted as an obstacle, creating challenges for knowledge generation and implementation. Many delegates underscored that all of STRP's work is done on a voluntary basis by 18 individuals. One veteran delegate noted that, while STRP has done a tremendous amount of work, "we cannot, in the long-run, think that a dozen and a half high-caliber scientists can cover the scientific needs associated with wetland conservation." Indeed, as indicated by the unfinished high- and low-priority tasks from the 2016-2018 work plan, and a very long list of requests for 2019-2021, the STRP needs to be strengthened to continue providing its invaluable input and deliver on a growing list of requests. According to some delegates, even a small allocation from the core budget "may go a long way," given STRP's efficiency.

Implementation of the Convention has also been a perennial concern. Certain delegates lamented that some of their colleagues meet at COPs every three years and "then go home and forget

all about it." In that respect, the need to produce, disseminate, and promote wetland type-sensitive guidelines that support implementation was highlighted by a number of participants. Others disagreed, noting the Convention has not been short of theoretical guidance, but rather of pragmatic institutional, technical, and socio-economic interventions that actually work on the ground.

Turning 50 –Steps Forward

COP13 marked the first Ramsar COP to be hosted in the Arab world, and COP14 in 2021 will be another landmark for the Convention as it becomes a half century old.

Because Ramsar is outside the UN system, the development of synergies is especially important. The momentum that the SDGs and the Paris Agreement provide has been observed by Ramsar aficionados, and efforts to link with these processes were evident during COP13. The degree to which these endeavors are successful will define to a great extent the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and its increased relevance.

In addition, finding innovative ways to attract additional funds, agreeing on an effective and efficient governance structure, promoting on the ground implementation, keeping up with knowledge generation, and balancing conservation and wise use of wetlands will all be crucial and determine its relative success. As the Convention approaches its 50th birthday, will it reach a new level of maturity, or fall into decline? The decisions, passion, and endurance of those engaged in the management and implementation of the Convention will ultimately decide whether the negative trends on wetlands can be reversed.

Upcoming Meetings

Our Future Water Berlin: The Our Future Water Berlin event will address how to achieve water security through: bridging communities; generating and disseminating knowledge through fact-based analysis; and advocating for water education for solving water challenges from various vantage points. **date:** 7 November 2018 **location:** Berlin, Germany **www:** <http://www.ourfuturewater.com/berlin/>

Barcelona Resilience Week: Barcelona Resilience Week aims to connect cities while providing the opportunity to: learn about ground-breaking resilience topics; share and exchange experiences and best practices; and gain practical knowledge. **dates:** 11-16 November 2018 **location:** Barcelona, Spain **contact:** UN-Habitat's Urban Resilience Programme **email:** info@cityresilience.org **www:** <http://urbanresiliencehub.org/action>

2018 UN Biodiversity Conference: The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the 9th Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 3rd Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (CBD COP 14, Cartagena Protocol COP/MOP 9, and Nagoya Protocol COP/MOP 3) are expected to address a series of issues related to implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. It will be preceded by a high-level segment on 14-15 November. **dates:** 17-29 November 2018 **location:** Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018>

2018 European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction: The European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) aims to address key issues that can accelerate implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR in coherence with the SDGs and

the Paris Agreement on climate change. **dates:** 21-23 November 2018 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** <https://www.unisdr.org/conference/2018/efdr>

2018 Climate Vulnerable Forum Virtual Leaders' Summit:

The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) will convene a virtual, online global political leaders' summit to build increased support to safeguard those most vulnerable to the growing climate change impacts. **date:** 22 November 2018 **location:** virtual **contact:** Climate Vulnerable Forum **email:** info@thecvf.org **www:** <https://thecvf.org/>

Sustainable Blue Economy Conference: The theme of the conference, Blue Economy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will focus on: new technologies and innovation for oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers; and challenges, potential opportunities, priorities and partnerships. **dates:** 26-28 November 2018 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs **phone:** +254-20-3318888 **email:** blueeconomykenya@mfa.go.ke **www:** <http://www.blueeconomyconference.go.ke>

Katowice Climate Change Conference: The Katowice Climate Change Conference will include the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 24) to the UNFCCC, along with meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. COP 24 is expected to finalize the rules for implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change under the Paris Agreement Work Programme. A High-Level Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Finance is expected to be held in conjunction with COP 24. **dates:** 2-14 December 2018 **location:** Katowice, Poland **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** cop24@mos.gov.pl; secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://cop24.gov.pl/en/>; <http://unfccc.int>

Water Security and Climate Change Conference: The Water Security and Climate Change Conference (WSCC) 2018 will advance discussions towards water secure societies, with special attention on related SDGs, including on: clean water and sanitation (SDG 6); sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); and combating climate change and its impacts (SDG 13). **dates:** 3-7 December 2018 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Kenyatta University **email:** wsc2018@ku.ac.ke **www:** <http://watersecurity.info>

Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Meeting: The 7th session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP 7) to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) will convene under the theme, "Beyond 2020: Shaping Flyway Conservation for the Future." **dates:** 4-8 December 2018 **location:** Durban, South Africa **contact:** UNEP/AEWA Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2413 **fax:** +49-228-815-2450 **email:** aewa.mop7@unep-aewa.org **www:** <https://www.unep-aewa.org/en/meeting/7th-session-meeting-parties-aewa>

CITES CoP18: The 18th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties will be held in Sri Lanka, directly following 71st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (SC71) on 21 May 2019. **dates:** 22 May – 3 June 2019 **location:** Colombo, Sri Lanka **contact:** CITES Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-917-81-39/40 **fax:** +41-22-797-34-17 **email:** info@cites.org **www:** <https://cites.org/>

Convention on Migratory Species Conference COP13: The 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals will

convene to review implementation of the convention. **dates:** 15-22 February 2020 **location:** Gandhinagar, India **contact:** CMS Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2401 **fax:** +49-228-815-2449 **email:** cms.secretariat@cms.int **www:** <http://www.cms.int>

2021 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Conference: COP14 will convene in 2021 at a date and location to be confirmed. **dates:** TBC **location:** TBC **contact:** Ramsar Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999-01-70 **fax:** +41-22-999-00-02 **email:** ramsar@ramsar.org **www:** <https://www.ramsar.org>

For additional meetings, see <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

Glossary

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GWO	Global Wetland Outlook
HLPF	High-level Political Forum
IAC	Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles
IOPs	International Organization Partners
IPLCs	Indigenous peoples and local communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
NDCs	Nationally determined contributions
RAM	Ramsar Advisory Mission
RIS	Ramsar Information Sheets
RRI	Ramsar Regional Initiative
SC	Standing Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change