



Council of the  
European Union

050404/EU XXVI. GP  
Eingelangt am 16/01/19

Brussels, 16 January 2019  
(OR. en)

5384/19

ENV 42

#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Outcome of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Dubai, UAE, 22-29 October 2018)  
- Report by the Presidency

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Delegations will find in the Annex a report by the former Austrian Presidency on the main results of the abovementioned meeting.

**Outcome of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands  
(Dubai, UAE, 22-29 October 2018)**

**- Report by the Presidency -**

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP 13) was held on 22-29 October 2018, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, under the main theme of "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future".

COP13 was attended by 1360 participants, among them 413 participants of Ramsar Administrative Authorities, representing 144 of the 170 Contracting Parties to the Convention, as well as representatives of the International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Ramsar Convention, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Wetlands International, BirdLife and International Water Management Institute (IWMI), United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The organizers counted around 500 visitors of the COP and especially of its numerous side events.

The Austrian Presidency organised very fruitful European Union (EU) Coordination meetings every morning and was greatly supported by a number of delegations (notably, the Check Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden) who each lead a subject requiring a position from the EU and its Member States. EU meetings usually started with EU Coordination, and, upon request, involved other European countries for the purposes of European Regional Coordination.

Finland was elected Vice-President and Uruguay as the President for COP 13. Agreed EU and its Member States Positions were confirmed and forwarded to the working groups, friend-of-chair-groups and the plenary by Austria or another EU country, on behalf of the EU Member States present at this COP.

The Ramsar Secretariat introduced the report on the List of Wetlands of International Importance (COP13 Doc.12), noting the designation of **131 new Ramsar Sites** adding **27 million hectares** of wetland area during the last 3 years, bringing it to a total number of 2,336 Ramsar sites with an area of 251,749,767 hectares.

The **Rules of Procedure (RoP)** from the previous COP were accepted with only minor modifications. The requests from the United States of America and from Japan to modify the RoP were not accepted.

Ramsar COP 13 adopted 25 Resolutions, which can be grouped in a) procedural, b) strategic and c) technical Resolutions. Only 1 draft resolution (draft resolution 18.19 on "Peace and Security" submitted by Central African Republic and Senegal) was withdrawn.

#### **a) Procedural resolutions and decisions**

The 2 contradicting draft resolutions on efficiency/effectiveness of structures and processes of the Convention (put forward by the "Facilitation Working Group" and by Switzerland) were merged together as a compromise text into a Resolution XIII.3 "**Governance of the Convention**". COP 13 decided to dissolve 6 working groups and establish a new "Effectiveness Working Group", tasked with developing strategies to increasing the efficiency of the Convention by the next COP. The ensuing discussion was superbly led by the delegation of United Kingdom.

The "**Responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee**" were reconfirmed (Res. XIII.4) . On Friday, 26 October, COP elected the members of the 2019-2021 Ramsar Standing Committee (SC). For the period 2019-2021 Europe will be represented in the Standing Committee by **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sweden, United Kingdom** as voting members and **Austria, Estonia, Russian Federation, Ukraine** as alternate members. Sweden was elected vice-chair and the UAE chair of SC. A Resolution on introducing **Arabic as the fourth Convention language** for documents and meeting interpretation was approved, containing a step by step plan to be implemented during a transitional period of 6 years. This will require confirmation at COP 14 and COP 15.

#### **b) Strategic Resolutions**

A Resolution about the "**Review of the fourth Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention 2016-2024**" was approved. It asks Parties to harmonize their strategic activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (especially SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, and 15).

A milestone at COP 13 was the approval of Resolution XIII.8 on the "**Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2019-2021**" which decided on the Scientific and Technical Review Panel Priority (STRP) Thematic Work Areas for 2019-2021 and instructed the STRP to develop its work plan for 2019-2021 for approval of the Standing Committee at its 57th meeting. Resolution XIII.9 on "**Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021**" brought new guidelines for the 19 RRI (wetland and training centres and networks), recognised that the **MedWet RRI** (26 countries) is financially independent of the Convention and - for the first time – assigned MedWet its own provisional budget for 2019-2021 (210.000 € per year).

Other important strategic resolutions were also adopted: "Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements", "Gender and Wetlands", "Ramsar Advisory Missions", "Wetlands in the Arctic and sub-Arctic", "Wetlands in West Asia", "Promoting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue-carbon ecosystems" and "Cultural values and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities and their contribution to climate-change mitigation and adaptation in wetlands".

### c) **Technical or strategic-technical Resolutions**

COP 13 also approved several technical resolutions, such as "Restoration of degraded peatlands to mitigate and adapt to climate change and enhance biodiversity and disaster risk reduction", "Rapidly assessing wetland ecosystem services", "Sustainable agriculture in wetlands", "Sustainable Urbanization", "The enhanced conservation of coastal marine turtle habitats and the designation of key areas as Ramsar Sites" and "Conservation and management of small wetlands".

The release of the *Global Wetland Outlook - State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People* provided a good basis for discussions on future challenges to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands. COP 13 was the first Ramsar COP to be hosted in the Arab world, and COP 14 in 2021, celebrating the **50th anniversary** of the Convention, will most probably be held in Zimbabwe, immediately before or after the ninth *World Water Forum* in Dakar, the first to be held in sub-Saharan Africa, where 319 million people do not have access to safe drinking water.

Further detailed information can be found at <https://www.ramsar.org/news/cop13-resolutions-and-conference-report>.