

Terms of Reference (TOR): Preparation of Governance Synthesis Report

BACKGROUND

The [Convention on Wetlands](#) is an intergovernmental treaty, which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It was the first of the modern global multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and remains the only MEA dedicated to the conservation of a specific critical ecosystem. Wetlands are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems. They provide essential services and supply all our fresh water. However, they continue to be degraded and converted to other uses.

The Secretariat of the Convention has its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, where the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides legal status and related administrative services for the Secretariat support contracting Parties in the implementation of the Convention.

PURPOSE

1. The objective of this consultancy is to prepare a synthesis report that brings together in one document information and findings from work undertaken and reports prepared on the matter of institutional strengthening of the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, from the 2nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP2) through to the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC62). All documents for review have been compiled by the Secretariat and are accessible on ISWG SharePoint Portal.
2. Contracting Parties to the Convention seek to ensure that the Secretariat of the Convention achieves organizational robustness with the goal of improving effectiveness is assisting Contracting Parties to deliver on the aims of the Convention. This includes, but is not limited to administrative arrangements, governance, leadership, human resources independency, high-level political engagement, and the Convention's visibility objectives. The need to achieve organizational robustness has been discussed by Parties for many years, with 4 consultancy reports prepared to help inform the discussion and decision making. As the body of information on the topic is quite large and spans many years, Contracting Parties are of the view that a synthesis report that brings together in one document information and findings from previous work and reports will be useful in facilitating future discussion and decision making.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since the 2nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP2) held in 1984, various meetings have been held and studies undertaken to determine the potential options to solve a number of challenges and opportunities related to amongst others:

- The lack of an independent international legal personality of the Secretariat of the Convention;
- The ability for the Secretariat to seek, receive, allocate and implement projects using donor funding independently;
- The recruitment and reduction of the turnover rate of Secretariat staff, as compared with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs);
- The lack of logistical and security assistance for staff traveling on missions, as compared with other MEAs, and;
- The visibility of the Convention and ability of the Secretariat to participate in high-level fora such as the United Nations General Assembly, as compared with other MEAs.

To identify potential concerns and challenges and assess various options and their implications two Working Groups were established, one in 2008 (open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group) and the second (the Observer Status Working Group) in 2019. The purpose of the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group was to recommend efficient and effective measures to improve the capacity and operation of the Secretariat to support and facilitate the implementation of the Convention and serve the interests of the Contracting Parties, whereas that of the Observer Status Working Group was to undertake a structured process to determine the legal status and options for the Secretariat of the Convention, including an analysis of the financial implications of various hosting arrangements. This task arose in the context of the possibility of the Convention on Wetlands to obtain observer status at the UN General Assembly and participation in UN high-level processes and events, in particular the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The key outcomes from the work of these Groups includes:

- 2012: Resolution XI.1: Institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat was adopted by COP11. The COP decided to renew its confidence in IUCN and to continue its hosting arrangement for the Secretariat of the Convention. In addition, the COP invited IUCN to work towards continued improvement of this cooperation, requested the Standing Committee to establish a mechanism that will facilitate negotiations between the Ramsar Secretariat and the Director General of IUCN to inter alia seek ways of improving the current operations of the Secretariat and enhancing the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. It further requested the Standing Committee through an appropriate Working Group to develop strategies to explore the accommodation of UN languages into the Convention, the elevation of the Conventions visibility and stature, the enhancement of synergies with other MEAs and the increased involvement in UNEPs initiatives and programmes.
- 2017: a request of the “observer status for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat in the General Assembly” as an item in the agenda of the 72nd session of the UNGA was presented by Uruguay, Chair of the Standing Committee.

- 2020: An independent analysis of the legal status of the Secretariat¹ was undertaken. The legal analysis report identified five specific options to address the key concerns about the legal status of the Secretariat and its operation and three additional options aimed at enhancing participation in UN high-level fora and processes under the UNGA, respectively the ECOSOC, in particular in the HLPF.
- 2020: A financial analysis of the legal status of the Secretariat² was undertaken to provide an in-depth financial analysis of three selected hosting options (determined by Parties to be the most viable options) and the current hosting arrangement with IUCN.

At its fourteenth meeting (COP14), the Conference of the Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XIV.6 on Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions³, in which paragraph 22: "instructs the Secretariat, in consultation with interested Contracting Parties, to prepare an institutional strengthening report with recommendations reflecting the needs of the Secretariat to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention, including but not limited to those related to administrative arrangements, governance, leadership, human resources independency, high-level political engagement, and the Convention's visibility objectives, and requested the Secretariat to present the report with recommendations to the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC62) for discussion and a subsequent draft resolution to SC63 for its consideration".

In line with Paragraph 22, the Secretariat provided a report at SC62. The report, which was based on two consultations with interested Parties outlined 5 Topics and included various options to address the challenges identified under those topics (SC62 document 11). The 5 identified topics were:

- Administrative arrangements
- Governance
- Leadership
- Human resources independency
- High-level political engagement, and the Convention's visibility objectives

Standing Committee 62:

- Took note of the Secretariat's report on institutional strengthening to support the implementation of the Convention in response to Resolution XIV.6, paragraph 22.
- Took note of the recommendations of the interested Contracting Parties and the Secretariat reflected in Annex 2 of the report.
- Established a Working Group to lead the process to achieve organizational robustness to support the implementation of the Convention, including through the preparation of a draft resolution for the consideration of the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting and requested that the terms of reference for the Working Group be tabled at SC62.

The Institutional Strengthening Working Group, during a meeting held on 11 October 2023 agreed that a report that synthesised the process followed to date, and the key outcomes was

¹ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/independent-analysis-legal-status-secretariat-convention-wetlands-ramsar-convention>.

² See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/financial-analysis-legal-status-ramsar-secretariat>.

³ See <https://www.ramsar.org/document/resolution-xiv6-enhancing-conventions-visibility-and-synergies-other-multilateral>.

required and that a consultancy would be needed, and recommended that the terms of reference should include:

- A synthesis of the process followed to date,
- A synthesis of the goals and/or objectives for strengthening the Secretariat,
- A synthesis of the key challenges and opportunities to achieve organisational robustness of the Convention and strengthen the Secretariat as identified through the processes described in section 2 above, the root causes for those challenges and the limiting factors for seizing opportunities, the solutions or options proposed for addressing each challenge and the limiting factors, and if these solutions have been implemented and are effective, and
- A summary of the remaining challenges and opportunities

3.8 In line with the above decisions, the Secretariat requires a consultant to develop a Synthesis Report on the Institutional Strengthening of the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands to support the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands to be presented at the 63rd meeting of the Standing Committee

SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant will be required to undertake the following tasks:

- Document a summary of the process followed to date (a chronology of events).
- In a simple, easy to read and summarised format, document the key points and outcomes from meeting documents and consultancy reports from COP 2 to SC62 to:
 - Define the goals and objectives for strengthening the Secretariat;
 - Identify key challenges (i.e., restrictions or limitations) and opportunities to achieve organisational robustness of the Convention and strengthen the Secretariat;
 - Identify the root causes for the challenges and the limiting factors for seizing opportunities;
 - Determine the solutions or options proposed for addressing each challenge and for seizing opportunities, and
 - Identify whether the identified solutions have been implemented.
- Identify and summarise the remaining challenges that need to be addressed.
- Undertake the following engagements:
 - a virtual engagement with the Institutional Strengthening Working Group to present the proposed framework for synthesis report (proposed for mid-January).
 - a virtual engagement with the Institutional Strengthening Working Group to present the synthesis report (proposed for 3rd week of February)
 - a virtual engagement with the Secretariat of the Convention to seek their perspective and views on opportunities to strengthen the Secretariat and limitations with the current hosting arrangement.
- Limitations, opportunities and options should be grouped into key themes as per paragraph 3.5 above. The report should bring all previous work into one place and synthesise the key issues in a manner to enable future decision making. The report and

any annexes, tables, figures, or graphics should serve as a tool that will enable the Working Group to move forward to identify future options.

- The report should be updated based on the outcomes from the engagements specified above.
- It is the intention of the Institutional Strengthening Working Group to engage with all Contracting Parties through a virtual information session after the Synthesis Report has been produced. To assist the Working Group to undertake this task, a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation of the process that was followed and outcomes will be required.

CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The consultant should have the following experience and profile:

1. Education
 - A graduate degree in a relevant field
2. Experience Required
 - Minimum 10 years of experience in analysis and review of documents,
 - A knowledge and understanding of governance within intergovernmental organizations,
 - A knowledge and understanding of governance within United Nations organizations,
 - Good knowledge of multilateral environmental agreements including the context of the Convention on Wetlands, and
 - Experience having undertaken a similar project/consultation is also desirable.
3. Skills Required
 - Analytical skills,
 - Writing skills,
 - Ability to read, write, and communicate in English. Ability to work in French and/or Spanish is a plus,
 - Ability to conduct research and analyse and report complex information.

The consultant must be registered on the relevant professional or trade register of the country of establishment (or residence, if self-employed) and in full compliance with the obligations relating to payment of social security contributions and applicable taxes.

DELIVERABLES

Key project deadlines include:

- Report framework (PowerPoint) presented to ISWG Chairs and Vice-Chairs in a virtual meeting – 8 January 2024
- Report framework (PowerPoint) presented to ISWG members in a virtual meeting – 11 January 2024

- Draft report (Word) presented to ISWG Chairs s and Vice-Chairs in a virtual meeting– 8 February 2024
- Draft report (Word document & PowerPoint presentation) presented to ISWG members in a virtual meeting – 12 February 2024
- Final report (Word document) reflecting comments from ISWG members delivered – 28 February 2024
- Summary of the final report (PowerPoint) delivered – 4 March 2024

EVALUATION CRITERIA

To ensure a fair and transparent selection process, proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria. Please review these criteria carefully and tailor your proposal accordingly.

1. Alignment with project goals and objectives:
 - Demonstrated understanding of the project's goals and objectives.
 - Clarity in how the proposed project aligns with and contributes to achieving these goals.
 - Proposal's potential to address the identified challenges or opportunities effectively.
2. Feasibility and implementation plan:
 - A clear and realistic plan for executing the proposed project.
 - Feasibility of the proposed timeline and budget.
 - Identification of potential risks and mitigation strategies.
3. Qualifications and experience:
 - Qualifications and expertise of the individual or team members involved in the project.
 - Past experience relevant to the project, including successful completion of similar projects.
 - The strength of partnerships or collaborations, if applicable.
4. Budget and cost-Effectiveness:
 - Clarity and transparency in the budget breakdown (estimated days of work and daily rate).
 - Justification of costs in relation to project deliverables.
 - Evidence of cost-effectiveness and value for money.

Proposals will undergo a review process conducted by an evaluation committee consisting of members of the ISWG and the Secretariat of the Convention. The selection process will utilize an evaluation matrix that is based on the requirements and parameters outlined in the TORs. Each criterion will be scored on a scale of 0 to 5 in the matrix, with 5 being the highest score. Proposals will be ranked based on their total score, and the top-ranked proposal(s) will be selected for further discussions and final decision.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

A maximum of CHF 10,000 has been budgeted for this consultancy.

Interested parties must submit a detailed proposal that includes:

- A cover letter introducing the organisation or themselves (if individual consultant),
- Written expression of interest, that includes the understanding of the project's objectives and an overview of the proposed approach,
- Individual or team CVs or resumes,
- Samples of relevant past work, such as reports, case studies, or project summaries,
- Professional references, and
- Cost proposal.

Proposals must be submitted by 1 December 2023 in pdf format that includes a detail work plan of activities and budget. Proposals must be submitted to iswg@ramsar.org. Incomplete or late submissions may not be considered.