

Brussels, 6 October 2025
(OR. en)

13596/25

ENV 958
CLIMA 405

INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar COP 15) (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23-31 July 2025) - Compilation of statements and speaking points by EU Member States

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#) for information a compilation of Statements and speaking points as delivered by EU Member States during the abovementioned meeting.

**15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands
(RAMSAR COP15)**

“Protecting wetlands for our common future”

(Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23-31 July 2025)

Compilation of Statements and speaking points by EU Member States

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Chair,

Honorable Ministers, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and friends,

In this opening statement, Denmark in the role of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union has the honor to speak on behalf of the twenty-seven Member States of the European Union.

It is with profound respect and a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you today at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. We are gathered in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, under the theme “Protecting wetlands for our common future”, a call to action that resonates now more than ever.

As we convene, we are acutely aware of the critical role wetlands play in sustaining biodiversity, regulating climate, and supporting the livelihoods of millions. Yet, these vital ecosystems are increasingly under threat from human activities and climate change. The urgency of our task is clear: to safeguard and restore wetlands for the well-being of present and future generations.

Over the next week, we will engage in discussions and deliberations that will shape the future of wetland conservation. Our agenda is ambitious, reflecting the complexity and scale of the challenges we face. From adopting the Strategic Plan for the Convention to the work on Ramsar Information Sheets and enhancing our collective efforts in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, our work here will set the course for the Ramsar Convention in the years to come.

A particular important task at this COP is to agree to a new Strategic Plan for the next nine years for the Ramsar Convention. This will be an important task for all parties – we need to ensure that we agree to an ambitious plan that can help all parties in addressing the important task of ensuring conservation and restoration of our wetlands, also contributing to the global targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Another subject that we unfortunately still have to address at this COP is the ongoing environmental emergency in Ukraine. The EU Member States condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has severe negative environmental impacts on wetlands and prevents Ukraine from fulfilling its obligations as a party to the Ramsar Convention.

Mr./Mrs. Chair, the representatives of the EU Member States present at this meeting are fully committed to step up actions to ensure the sustainable future of our important wetlands across the planet. I urge each of us to approach our deliberations with a spirit of collaboration and commitment. Let us draw inspiration from the resilience of the wetlands we seek to protect and the communities that depend on them. Together, we can forge solutions that are both effective and equitable, ensuring that wetlands continue to thrive as a legacy for all.

In closing, I express my gratitude to the Government of Zimbabwe for hosting this important gathering and to all of you for your dedication to the mission of the Ramsar Convention. Let us embark on this journey with determination and hope, united in our shared purpose.

Thank you.

22.3 Consolidated Resolution on inventories

Thank you Chair.

The EU Member States support this draft Consolidated Resolution on inventories and thank the Secretariat for the work done in harmonizing all the documents.

23.1 Draft resolution on financial and budgetary matters

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the work made by the Subgroup of Finance for the last triennium. We are grateful for preparing comprehensive draft resolution of budgetary matters.

Paragraph 3 should specify the exact number of Contracting Parties that are currently in arrears rather than referring to it as a majority of Contracting Parties.

Paragraph 13 should clarify that the additional Contracting Parties to the subgroup on Finance will be treated as observers instead of group members, in accordance with Resolution VI.17.

We propose to add in paragraph 19 a statement that the Management Working Group should be tasked with preparing and submitting a draft resolution for COP16 that outlines the consequences for Contracting Parties that are in arrears for more than three years.

We believe that the last part of paragraph 35 is not of financial interest, and should be moved to a more appropriate draft resolution.

The Ramsar awards must be identified as a priority by the COP in the non-core budget, so we propose to add them in Annex 4.

23.2 Draft resolution on the responsibilities, roles and composition of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention on Wetlands

Thank you, Mr. President,

I speak on behalf of the EU Member States.

EU Member States supports the adoption of the resolution.

There is just one issue to be solved. The paragraph 12 and 18i alt. concerning decision on what subset of Ramsar Award categories to be awarded each triennium are contradictory. Our suggestion is that paragraph 12 is deleted and paragraph 18i alt is kept, giving the Standing committee responsibility for deciding what subset of Ramsar Award categories to be awarded each triennium.

Concerning the suggestion from the Asian countries. The direct consequence is that the suggestion would strengthen Europe's and Asia's voice in relation to the other regions.

Another consequence would be that SC would increase with two representatives, and we think it is already big enough and the work of the SC could be even harder if it got any bigger.

We think that if the regional representation shall change, it should be done in a more thorough way, for example in a working group or similar and all regions should be involved in such a review. In summary, EU Member States cannot support the suggestion at this time.

Thank you, Mr. President.

EU Member States can support that the issue is left to the SC together with the Management working group.

23.3 Draft resolution on the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Wetlands 2025-2034

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States are positive towards an ambitious plan that supports the achievement of the goals of the Convention on Wetlands and its resolutions, and we view the draft resolution of the Fifth Strategic Plan as a comprehensive document aimed at this. The current version of the draft resolution results from two years of hard work by the Working Group, reflecting the principles of the Convention.

It addresses the environmental, social, and economic aspects of wetland management on a global scale and sets forward new goals and targets to pursue our ambitious work on the protection of wetlands.

The draft resolution needs further amendments, [which we will send in writing].

The EU Member States acknowledge the significant efforts of the informal working group and the progress we have made in our dialogue. However, we must also recognize that there remain substantial unresolved issues that need to be addressed before we can reach a consensus.

In light of this, the EU Member States support the establishment of a contact group at the earliest opportunity. This will allow us to advance our negotiations and work towards a mutually agreeable resolution.

23.4 Draft resolution on enhancing the Convention’s visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

Mr. Chair,

As mentioned earlier, the EU Member States generally support this Draft Resolution. We have a few suggestions on improving the resolution, which we shall provide to the secretariat in writing. These have to do for example with improving the wording regarding the Rio Conventions, adding relevant international organizations and strategies (UNESCO, the UN System-Wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation), including recent decisions (i.e. CBD COP16), and making the Resolution applicable to Ramsar guidance on national wetlands which will still be published. Furthermore, we will suggest formal corrections. We suggest to reinsert at the end of paragraph 21 the following text: “the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes open brackets Water Convention close brackets”, which is a global convention, open to all UN member states and unfortunately has been left out after the Standing Committee 64 however there was big support for this. Furthermore, we will suggest formal corrections.

Thank You!

The EU Member States will engage to maintain strong and meaningful operative paragraphs in the Resolution. We are open to focusing the draft resolution on the most relevant international conventions and MEAs, as long as it does not substantially undermine previous ambitions.

The following are comments on selected additional amendments proposed by EU Member States.

In the second part of the document, there were three operative paragraphs (38, 39, 43) which should be moved to the first section of the draft resolution.

Paragraph 9: We propose to delete: “the Global Goal on Adaptation and Nationally Determined Contributions of the Paris Agreement” and add a statement: “especially with regard to the new NDCs and the Global Goal on Adaptation”, as the GGA and NDCs are two aspects of the PA and they need to be consistent with the presentation of the CBD/GBF and UNCCD/Land Degradation Neutrality Targets.

Paragraph 21: We suggest to reinsert: “the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (” and “Water Convention)” which is a global convention, open to all UN member states”.

Paragraph 30: We suggest to add: “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)”, because of protected areas (biosphere reserves, natural world heritage).

Paragraph 35: The Convention toolkit is just one of many guidance documents for national inventories from the Secretariat. Moreover, the Secretariat is currently working on further guidance documents for national wetland inventories, possibly to be introduced by the COP 15. We therefore suggest to thus make this paragraph more general in order to avoid adjusting this in the near future.

Paragraph 52: EU Member States will ask to bring the reference to gender equality and Res. XIII.18 on Gender and wetlands back in. This was included in Resolution XIV.6 but has been omitted by the Secretariat for this DR.

In case of paragraphs for which alternative wording was proposed (13, 14, 27, 46-50),

EU Member States prefer the original version for paragraph 13, 27, 46 – 50. With regard paragraph 14, we prefer the alternative version, which is more concise and contains fewer references to documents that will expire soon.

Dear Mr. Chair,

We are speaking on behalf of the EU Member States. We are supportive of the revised draft resolution. However, we have several remarks:

Paragraph 9: we support the UK and prefer ‘the Paris Agreement’ instead of ‘it’s Paris Agreement’

Paragraph 49: we don’t agree with the addition of ‘subject to available resources’. We believe that supporting the SDG 6 is an essential task of the Secretariat. Therefore, we ask the deletion of it.

We prefer the following changes in art. 45 bis: The Paris Agreement and of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change:

45bis. RECOGNIZES the importance of the protection, restoration, and wise use of wetlands as a fundamental contribution to climate change mitigation, as well as to strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of humans and ecosystems to the negative impacts of climate change, and in this regard, highlights the importance of the Convention in supporting the objectives and efforts that countries engage with under of the Paris Agreement and of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Thank You.

Dear Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the EU Member States. Thank you very much for this second revised version. We support the text as put forward, however we have one remark. In paragraph 21, we ask the deletion of the reference ‘the world Coastal Forum’. As this is not an MEA, which was the goal of this list, and therefore doesn’t fit in this paragraph.

With regard to paragraph 13, we can be flexible.

Thank you very much.

23.5 Draft resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2025-2028

Mr. Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the EU Member States. We thank the secretariat for compiling all the comments that came in on this draft resolution. However, EU Member States do not agree with the inclusion of paragraph 8 REQUESTS the Secretariat to liaise with regional representatives to the Standing Committee and prepare a report on the opportunities for Ramsar Regional Initiatives in each region of the Convention on Wetlands.

Thank You.

Mr. Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the EU Member States here present. We thank the secretariat for compiling all the comments that came in on this Draft Resolution. However, EU Member States do not agree with the inclusion of paragraph 8 by a contracting party, which “REQUESTS the Secretariat to liaise with regional representatives to the Standing Committee and prepare a report on the opportunities for Ramsar Regional Initiatives in each region of the Convention on Wetlands”. We are of the opinion that this request should ideally be an initiative by the individual RRI under the conventions.

Thank You, Chair.

23.6 Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA): Draft resolution on CEPA

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States welcome the draft resolution consolidating CEPA Recommendations and Resolutions.

However, the EU Member States are concerned that the draft resolution, as it stands, places an excessive monitoring and reporting burden on the CEPA Oversight Panel, which takes away time from its more important efforts of advising and guiding Contracting Parties – rather than monitoring them.

Specifically, paragraph 11 of the draft resolution places an excessive work load on the Panel, expecting it to monitor and report – in general – on implementation of the CEPA Program at national and international levels. The EU Member States suggest that this monitoring and reporting is more focused on key issues and priorities. The EU Member States therefore suggest that we align paragraph 11 more with the text of Annex 2 of the draft resolution, specifically the description of the Panel's specific function iii (roman 3).

We would like to highlight that the World Wetlands Day webpage is an inspiring tool for Contracting Parties in organizing their national activities. We also wish that the Secretariat makes information on World Wetlands Day, i.e. presentations, received reports and outstanding examples, more specific and visible on the webpage.

We will send a text proposal for these amendments.

In conclusion, the EU Member States support the adoption of the draft resolution with the changes described.

23.7 Draft resolution on the Status of Sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance

Mr. Chair,

EU Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for the new report on the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

We congratulate those countries that have established new Ramsar Sites. We also greatly welcome the efforts of those Contracting Parties that have submitted Ramsar Information Sheets and maps, which were missing.

We appreciate the progress in updating Ramsar Information Sheets and maps, which we hope will increase when the Ramsar Information Sheets format is improved.

It was a very helpful Convention's initiative to support Contracting Parties in creating GIS boundaries of Ramsar Sites. We are looking forward to a continuation of this project.

Furthermore, EU Member States are very concerned that none of the 46 Ramsar Sites were removed from the Montreux Record.

We would like to divide paragraph 5 into two paragraphs: one concerning Ramsar sites that lack essential data such as Ramsar Information Sheets and maps and another one on those Ramsar sites that lack updates. Separating these two issues in the draft resolution will allow us to obtain a better picture of the situation.

Some small adjustments should also be made to align the draft resolution with the new report on the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

We will provide the proposed text in writing.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I speak on behalf of the EU Member States.

Firstly, we have a suggestion for a replacement in paragraph 15. We suggest that the suggested amendment from the date of receipt of the report is replaced with a specific date to make the meaning clearer, and we suggest from August 1st 2026.

Secondly, this is a resolution about the status of sites on the list of Wetlands of international importance and contains among other things facts about Ramsar sites and the need for updates of Ramsar information sheets. The main goal is to provide information and to improve the status of the Ramsar sites.

The purpose of several of the suggested amendments is to lift questions of territorial disputes between countries. These are important questions but has no place in this resolution. The resolution should keep its original focus. The EU Member States cannot accept the suggested amendments that in one way or another refers to the issue of territorial disputes.

Thank you, Mr. President

23.8 Draft resolution on the process for recruiting a new Secretary General

Mr. Chair,

The issue has been discussed for a long time, and it seems that an agreement should be reached between Contracting Parties. The EU Member States still prefer a decision by the Standing Committee on a procedure for the recruitment of a new Secretary General, rather than a resolution. We see many disadvantages in having a resolution as presented in the draft.

Firstly, as soon as the resolution is outdated, the Standing Committee cannot follow it, and since they are not allowed to act in any other way, a new resolution must be adopted by a COP. A process that will take several months (it can be done either at a next COP or an extraordinary one). A Standing Committee decision, on the other hand, can more easily be revised, if necessary, thus allowing for a more flexible and faster process.

Secondly, we don't see added value in having too many consultations with the Contracting Parties on matters such as questions for candidates etc. Moreover, they could slow down the recruitment process. The Contracting Parties are represented in the recruitment committee, which is most often composed of senior officers who have extensive experience and may have been involved in numerous recruitment processes throughout their careers. The Secretariat and the IUCN also have extensive experience and knowledge.

Thirdly, if the transparency regarding candidates is excessively high, there is a risk that the Convention may not nominate the most suitable candidates. The process should be rather confidential, as the potential candidates may not want to reveal that they are looking for a new position.

We believe the COP should approve a resolution that includes a lot of flexibility for the Standing Committee. Otherwise, we would face delays due to the lengthy consultation process. The current draft resolution needs to be amended extensively to be accepted by EU Member States.

23.9 Draft resolution on implementing the institutional strengthening of the Convention on Wetlands

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the efforts of the Working Group in supporting the draft resolution that aims to strengthen the institutional framework of the Convention on Wetlands. However, we have a few suggestions for improvements.

Firstly, we believe the Management Working Group should take responsibility for staff issues, rather than having a separate working group designated for that purpose.

Additionally, we propose that the new Working Group should not be obligated to submit a single draft resolution. It would be more effective for their draft texts to be integrated into other draft resolutions that address similar issues or for different themes to be organized into separate draft resolutions. This approach would facilitate easier consolidation later on and help avoid a resolution that encompasses too many topics at once.

We would like to highlight that we do not accept the establishment of a new working group on resource mobilization, including the establishment of a dedicated trust fund, by 66th Standing Committee. Therefore, we ask for deletion of paragraph 8.

When it comes to the issue of the Convention's legal status, we suggest that it is deleted from Annex 1, as most conventions do not possess legal personality.

Finally, considering the limited human and financial resources of the Convention, we invite the esteemed delegations to consider whether elements of the proposed mandate of the new Working Group could be covered by other working groups.

We have some other amendments that we will provide in writing.

Mr. Chair,

We highly appreciate the efforts of the work of the Friend of the Chair on para 8 regarding giving the task to the sub group on finance the task of having a study on resource mobilization produced. We can support para 8 in its new and revised version.

The process described in para 8 is clear. First, we produce a study and on that basis the sub group on finance produces recommendations. Therefore, we cannot preempt the outcomes of this process. Therefore, we cannot accept the last sentence of para 2b whereby the sub group on finance is supposed to report at SC67 on a: “Lack of clear formalized financial mechanisms for Convention funding”. Instead, we propose referring to the content of para 8 by stating that SC 67 should report on progress on study on resource mobilization

We would like to reiterate that we do believe that the Management Working Group should take responsibility for staff issues, rather than having a separate working group designated for that purpose.

When it comes to the issue of the Convention’s legal status, we would like to reiterate that we suggest that it is deleted from Annex 1, as most conventions do not possess legal personality.

Considering the limited human and financial resources of the Convention, we invite the esteemed delegations to consider whether elements of the proposed mandate of the new Working Group could be covered by other working groups.

We will send in our written comments.

23.10 Draft resolution on the future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2025-2028

Belgium on behalf of the EU Member States:

Mr. Chair,

EU Member States support the adoption of the draft resolution. We think that the suggested tasks for the coming triennium are important and we support them. We are especially interested in the study on legal and policy matters and the work on potentially revising the Convention's classification for the wetland types. We think that the study about OECM might be given higher priority. Other topics that may be considered are the hydrological cycle and the atmospheric streams and how land use has an impact on them. We find that the gap-analysis for the Ramsar sites might be given a lower priority and can be done when the wetland types might have been revised. We expect that the tasks will be specified during further work.

Belgium on behalf of the EU Member States proposed that it be specified that policy briefs and other listed outputs are examples, and that some flexibility be given to the STRP. They withdrew this proposal following a statement by Zambia, highlighting the importance of policy briefs on all STRP outcomes.

Australia and Belgium, on behalf of the EU Member States, proposed an amendment to take into account “contributions from Indigenous Peoples and local communities” instead of “traditional and cultural knowledge”.

23.11 Draft resolution on the establishment of the Waterbird Estimates Partnership (WEP) and the delivery of the 2027 edition of Waterbird Population Estimates (WPE2027)

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Since it is the first time that Hungary takes the floor at this conference, I would like to express our great appreciation to the host country for the organization of Ramsar COP15.

Mr. Chair, Hungary speaks on behalf of the EU Member States.

The EU Member States welcome the overall approach of the draft resolution and support more frequent updates to waterbird population estimates. Updates conducted more often than every 10–15 years are essential for effective and relevant conservation action. We support the creation of a consortium to coordinate and facilitate these updates.

We believe the earlier requirement under Resolution VIII.38 - to finalize updates at every COP - should be retired. A more strategic use of resources, aligned with other processes such as IUCN Red List revisions, would improve coordination, data integration, and cost-efficiency.

Rather than fixed update cycles (e.g., every six years), we recommend setting a work plan that identifies the most urgent update needs for specific taxonomic groups, with a long-term perspective.

We emphasize that additional reporting obligations for Contracting Parties should be avoided where robust systems already exist, such as EU Birds Directive reporting and regular data submission to Wetlands International.

The role of the data in the Strategic Plan remains unclear, and we call for further clarification before firm conclusions are drawn.

We support the establishment of the WEP Secretariat at Wetlands International and recognize the need for flexibility in case of limited funding. Options such as focusing on subsets of species or specific regions, and better coordination with other processes, should be considered.

Securing sufficient, stable funding is critical. The resolution should include contingency measures to manage funding gaps while maintaining the initiative’s ambition. We underline that waterbird population estimates require modest but reliable financial support and should be interpreted in a wider geographical context to inform conservation policy effectively.

We will send a text proposal for amendments to the Secretariat.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23.12 Draft resolution on the application of Criteria 6 and 9 to new and existing Wetlands of International Importance

Mr Chair,

The EU Member States thank the proponents and the Secretariat for the draft resolution. We agree with the overarching goal— to provide clearer, more scientifically robust and practically useful guidance for applying Criterion 6 (waterbirds) and Criterion 9 (non-avian wetland species).

However, we have a few suggestions to improve this resolution.

First, unnecessary cross-references and duplicated wording between the two criteria should be removed to improve coherence.

Second, consistent application must be anchored in trusted sources such as the Waterbird Population Portal for waterbirds and IUCN databases for non-avian taxa.

Third, we propose deleting the lengthy glossary annexes and developing separate guidance documents for each criterion, so future updates can be made more swiftly.

Fourth, we question the proposed “alternative average” population figures; and believe designations should rely on a single, recent and representative estimate from a year without extreme weather, ensuring assessments remain robust and comparable.

Finally, we encourage all Contracting Parties to contribute national data and support capacity-building, and we reiterate our opposition to introducing national population thresholds except where a species is endemic.

We will submit our comments and proposed changes in writing.

Thank you Chair.

Thank you Chair.

The 27 EU Member States thank for the revised draft resolution received this morning, which we in general support. We have however once concern that we would like to raise, which I will address now, and which we will submit.

With reference to paragraph 90 and in light of ongoing developments in global bird taxonomy, including the recent publication of *AviList 2025*, we recommend avoiding specific references to fixed taxonomies such as *HBW/BirdLife*. Instead, the guidance should allow for flexibility, provided that any taxonomy used is transparent, scientifically sound, and widely accepted. This will future-proof the Strategic Framework and prevent inconsistencies with other conventions or emerging global standards specific criteria based on waterbirds

23.13 Draft resolution on [updates to] Ramsar Information Sheets

Mr. Chair,

Speaking on behalf of EU Member States, we would like to thank Australia and Rwanda for Chairing the Working Group on Ramsar Information Sheets Updating, Contracting Parties for participating in this collective effort, which will result in a more robust and up-to-date information for both decision-making and scientific purposes.

EU Member States strongly believe in the need to prioritize a limited number of compulsory fields that require being filled and updated over optional fields, while keeping the overall structure of the RIS to facilitate long-term monitoring. This prioritization needs to be guided by principles established by COP in the draft resolution. EU Member States are convinced that the six principles currently listed in the draft resolution provide sufficient guidance for prioritization and that the objective of reducing administrative and technical burden on Parties shall be included either in the chapeau of item (a) or as principle (i) under the same item.

After more than ten years, the Ramsar Information Sheets and the online tool that is used to administer them is still not fit for purpose. Its user-friendliness leaves much to be desired for both countries and compilers, on the one hand, and the Secretariat and reviewers, on the other. Consequently, the Secretariat is months behind with the review of inputs and changes and, the Ramsar Information Sheets of more than 75% of Ramsar Sites are out of date.

Conscious of the urgency to improve the Ramsar Information Sheets, EU Member States propose to empower the Standing Committee to decide on prioritization of key fields and other minor improvements that would not change the structure and contents of the RIS while resulting in significant reduction of the time needed to fill, update and review the information. More sizeable improvements, for example the deletion of certain fields, adding new ones or dividing existing ones into several smaller ones, can also be suggested by the Working Group, but shall be submitted by the Standing Committee for adoption at COP16, which is expected to take place in 2028.

In the same spirit, EU Member States are in favor of requesting the Secretariat to invest in improving user-friendliness of online tools and offline templates, for instance by improving filters of the database, streamlining the user interface, creating an Excel version of the offline template, allowing automatic upload of information from offline templates, as well as other technical improvements that would result in a reduction of administrative and technical burden on Parties. The budget of the Convention must take into consideration such requirements, which shall be duly assessed. This is a small investment for the Secretariat with a huge return of investment for all Parties.

Regarding the Draft Terms of Reference of the proposed Working Group, the current version of the Terms of Reference that are annexed to the draft resolution is identical to the Terms of Reference of the old Working Group. EU Member States are of the opinion that the Draft Terms of Reference of the new Working Group should be removed from the Annex, updated in line with the contents of the draft resolution, and adopted by the Standing Committee as soon as possible, possibly intersessionally before its 67th meeting.

The Ramsar Information Sheets must become smarter. EU Member States are in favor of asking the Secretariat to enable the automated transfer of data from existing sources, including species lists, such as the IUCN Red List and the Habitats and Birds Directives, as well as bulk updates of several sites at once, as appropriate. While there is no consensus on whether the RIS system shall send automatic emails notifying countries about changes to RIS, such as the submission of revisions by the Secretariat, EU Member States support the compromise solution of allowing users to opt out of some or all notifications, while insisting that such notification emails do not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory the wetland is situated, as per Article 2(3) of the Convention.

In case the establishment of an RIS Fund is proposed again: EU Member States are not in favor of the establishment of a RIS Fund for technical and administrative support under the Convention, as its operation costs will most likely exceed its benefits. EU Member States are instead in favor of reducing as much as possible the administrative and technical burden, as well as financial impact, of the RIS system on Parties, thus making capacity building and resources for the least developed countries not required for this specific purpose. Peer-to-peer learning is instead to be promoted, with the support of the Secretariat, within the limit of available human and financial resources.

Thank you.

Mr. President, Madam Secretary-General, Dear fellow delegates and members of the secretariat,

As co-chair of the Friends of the Chair group for the RIS update representing EU Member States, on behalf of my Kenyan colleague representing Africa region, the co-chair, and my Italian colleague, the co-chair (recalled to his capital), I would like to thank you for the trust you have placed in us to guide these important deliberations.

The Friends of the Chair group met at length yesterday, twice, and discussions continued late into the night. This group met in a constructive atmosphere, fostering mutual listening and the search for compromise and consensus. The discussions enabled progress on major issues in a spirit of effective collaboration.

These discussions led to the draft resolution that was submitted to you this morning. The draft resolution reaffirms the commitments of the Contracting Parties regarding the designation, monitoring, and updating of Ramsar Sites, emphasizing the strategic importance of Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for transparency and data quality.

It decides to establish a new working group on Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS), working on scientific and technical improvements, and with new Terms of Reference to be developed by the working group, ab initio, operating in accordance with the Convention, and its Rules of Procedures and resolution xiv.3 the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention on Wetlands aiming to present a revised RIS at COP16 by also considering advice from the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), and by examining mapping issues relevant to RIS under the Convention on Wetlands. Furthermore, notwithstanding the provisions of the decision in paragraph 9 of the proposed resolution, the draft instructs the Secretariat, based on the outcomes of the previous working group on RIS updating and incorporating advice from the STRP, to identify and recommend to Standing Committee concrete solutions.

Finally, to be technically fully aligned with the considerations and recalling, as co-chairs, I propose the following minor modification to paragraph 10.d " operationalize the conclusions agreed by the working group and COP16, as established in the paragraph 9 in the present resolution [...]"

This statement is delivered on behalf of the two co-chairs of the Friends of the Chair Group.

23.14 Draft resolution on strengthening action on culture and wetlands

Mr Chair, Poland is speaking on behalf of the 27 EU Member States.

EU Member States support the adoption of the draft resolution. We propose to establish a Working Group on how to formalise the work on culture and wetlands, so that a draft resolution covering the topic is presented to the COP16. We also have some minor amendments that we will send in writing.

Mr. Chair, Poland is speaking on behalf of the 27 EU Member States.

The EU Member States support the revised version of the DR 23.14.

23.15 Draft resolution on restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems to support ecological character biodiversity and ecosystem services

Thank you, Mr. President,

Finland is speaking on behalf of the European Union Member States.

We are delighted on the progress made with this resolution. However, we propose, in a spirit of moving forward, as a compromise in exchange of accepting deletion of the end of paragraph 19 for the inclusion of after water management “for the green and blue waters” in paragraph 15.

Thank you, Mr. President,

Finland is speaking on behalf of EU Member States. Generally, this draft resolution, stressing the importance of freshwater ecosystem restoration for the implementation of the Convention, is supported by the EU Member States, who are also thankful to Gabon for taking into account most of the EU Member States comments. However, further amendments to the draft resolution could still be required. We will be sending these in writing to the Secretariat. Thank you, Mr. President,

23.16 Draft resolution on strengthening national actions for the conservation and restoration of [waterbird flyways] [critical waterbird flyway sites]

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Hungary is speaking on behalf of the EU Member States.

At Standing Committee 64, the EU Member States as well as other Contracting Parties recommended that the draft resolution adopt a broader scope, building upon and assessing the implementation of Resolution X.22 on Promoting International Cooperation for the Conservation of Waterbird Flyways. The EU Member States maintain that the draft resolution should encompass all flyways in general, drawing on examples and lessons learned from the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

The EU Member States request the Secretariat to engage with existing flyway processes to understand where gaps exist in the implementation of Resolution X.22. and to report back to the Standing Committee on opportunities for Parties to further enhance implementation of national actions for wetlands of importance for migratory waterbirds. The EU Member States emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation among conservation organizations operating across different flyways.

The EU Member States consider that the assessment of bird populations along flyways should be conducted when new population data becomes available to ensure accuracy and relevance. Additionally, the EU Member States suggest that the implementation of the resolution on flyways be integrated into the Strategic Plan, thereby ensuring that all Contracting Parties report on progress in its implementation.

The EU Member States also appreciate the openness of China to incorporating the amendments proposed by the EU Member States.

Written amendments to the draft resolution will be provided to the Secretariat.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Hungary is speaking on behalf of the EU Member States. We would like to thank the proponents of this draft resolution for producing this proposal and we would also like to thank them for incorporating the amendments proposed by the EU Member States. We propose Rev1 of the draft resolution for adoption.

Thank you, Mr. Chair

23.17 Draft resolution on promoting incorporation of new technology and traditional knowledge in wetland conservation, restoration, management and wise use

Thank you, Mr. President.

Since this is the first time Germany is taking the floor, we would like to thank the government of Zimbabwe for hosting us (here in the beautiful wetland city of Victoria Falls).

Coming to the draft resolution at stake, the following statement is provided on behalf of all EU Member States.

EU Member States appreciate the work done by Contracting Parties and the Chair of the STRP during 64th meeting of the Standing Committee. The text was improved in order to reflect all the issues raised.

EU Member States can support this revised version as it envisages now, that sharing has to be limited to what Contracting Parties have the right to share. It is also now highlighted, which was a concern of EU Member States, that sharing knowledge and technologies has to be voluntary and on mutually agreed terms. We further suggest amendments to reflect the fact, that free, prior and informed consent only applies when knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is accessed and not just for technology in general. We furthermore have some editorial changes which we will share in writing.

Thank you, Mr. President.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the 27 EU Member States. We want to thank the Secretariat or the proponents of this Draft Resolution for the revised version in which many of our comments have been taken up. We are of the opinion that this draft resolution is almost ready for adoption.

However, we have two major points for further consideration and minor considerations.

First, we would like to maintain the original paragraph 12 as opposed to 12(bis) because we think paragraph 12(bis) requires major amendments. Should they however be a preference for paragraph 12 bis, we would be happy to engage in discussions to resolve the outstanding issues in the paragraph.

Second, we have one additional amendment in para 19 to correctly reflect the reference to Indigenous and local knowledge as applied by IPBES.

We will submit our comments in writing.

Thank you.

Mr. Chair I am speaking on behalf of the 27 EU Member States. We do not accept this proposed change from Brazil. We met in the contact group and agreed on a version pending Brazil's confirmation upon consultation with their capital. This conformation was made later on. A change the said paragraph will mean we all have to revisit the document.

Thank you, Mr President!

23.18 Draft resolution on achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States support the draft resolution on achieving the equitable and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures as it is important to align the definition of protected areas and OECM's under the Convention on Wetlands with those of the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure that the Ramsar sites to the furthest possible extent can contribute to target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The EU Member States will propose some amendments in writing, as i.a. most text of paragraph 21 duplicates the content of draft resolutions on Ramsar sites. Furthermore, paragraph 22ii can be moved to the draft resolution on the RIS, and paragraphs 14bis and 18, as they refer to resource mobilisation, should be moved to the draft resolution dealing with resource mobilisation. We also don't see the need that STRP should provide further technical support on delineating site boundaries to Contracting Parties, as many handbooks on this matter were already published.

The EU Member States support the draft resolution on achieving the equitable and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures as it is important to align the definition of protected areas and OECM's under the Convention on Wetlands with those of the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure that the Ramsar sites to the furthest possible extent can contribute to target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

EU Member States are of the opinion that OECM and protected areas are two different systems that you do not choose between. Therefore, it does not make sense to prioritize one over the other.

We should focus on aligning definitions of OECM's. Not on resource mobilization. Therefore, we cannot accept the language in para 14b.

The EU Member States are of the opinion that the wording on resource mobilization should be aligned with the wording on resource mobilization in the draft resolution on the strategic plan. Therefore, we propose rewording those paragraphs.

23.19 Draft resolution on youth empowerment and integration: driving engagement in and the longevity of the Convention on Wetlands

Thank you Chair.

I am speaking on behalf of the 27 EU Member States.

The 27 EU Member States thank for the revised draft resolution received this morning, which we in general support. We have however a few concerns that we would like to raise, which I will address now, and which we will submit in writing:

With reference to paragraph 3, line 2, we ask to keep the expression „youth“ instead of „their“ as this has a broader meaning.

In para 10, lines 3-5, we would like to keep the original text.

In para 13, line 2, we do not support deletion of the junior professional program

We do not support deleting Para 14 d.

We also do not support including 14bis, this should be text for ToR if the YWG decides so.

We do not support deleting Para 15 a.

We do not support Para 15 e. as this point seems to be too specific.

Finally, it is not clear to us why annex 1 has been deleted.

We do, however believe that these small issues can be sorted out in a brief meeting between interested parties. So maybe this is a good way forward.

Thank you Chair!

23.20 Draft resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles for the wise use of wetlands

Thank you Mr. President (Chair).

I am speaking on behalf of the 27 EU Member States.

We would like to thank India for proposing this resolution.

The EU Member States acknowledge that, in the revised draft resolution following SC64, many of our comments have been accommodated and we have made significant progress with this DR.

We still think it is important to strengthen the focus on lifestyles that are relevant for Ramsar sites and wetland management across the world.

This is why our main comment on this resolution would be to highlight CEPA activities as they clearly relate to wetland management and can be included in a management plan.

We will provide our written comments to the Secretariat.

23.21 Draft resolution on recognition of river dolphins as key species for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in South America and Asia

Dear Mr. Chair,

Speaking on behalf of the EU Member States,

Thank you for incorporating the EU Member States comments into the revised document. However, we cannot fully agree with the change made to paragraph 12.

We request that the second part of this paragraph be reinstated, as this enables species included in regional and national red lists to be considered more broadly. The fact that different conditions apply in different countries and regions must be considered in the resolution. Without this section, the application of the provisions of this resolution risk once again be limited, despite the changes made in other paragraphs.”

23.22 Draft resolution on education and participation as a basis for the management of urban and peri-urban wetlands

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States are of the position that this resolution partially overlaps with previous resolutions on education in general. However, we are of the opinion that a resolution focusing on education in urban and peri-urban wetlands could be of added value also to reach specific target groups and liaise or join forces with ongoing or emerging initiatives, also outside the Convention. Such a focus would allow to establish closer links between initiatives focusing on education and participation in urban and peri-urban wetland management, the Wetland City Accreditation as a voluntary instrument under the Convention, and additional, relevant initiatives and organizations and networks such as Local Governments for Sustainability (known as ICLEI). Accordingly, we will submit suggested amendments in writing.

Thank You.

23.23 Draft resolution on assessing pressures on and risks to wetlands

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States welcome the draft resolution and its helpful, voluntary tool to support contracting parties in the important task of assessing pressures and risks on wetlands.

The EU Member States thank the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia, the involved experts, the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the Philippines for their work in developing this tool.

23.24 Amended draft resolution on the Ramsar List

Thank you Chair.

The EU Member States recognize the need to address the issue regarding the Ramsar List. However, we are of the position that addressing the issue would require further work through a process led by the Standing Committee in preparation for COP16. Therefore, we can support the withdrawal of this draft resolution.

23.25 Draft resolution on thanks to the host country, the Republic of Zimbabwe

Mr. Chair,

The EU Member States sincerely thank the government and the people of Zimbabwe for their generosity and hospitality. We greatly appreciate the tremendous efforts made by the host country in organizing COP15, including the High-level Segment, and in achieving agreements on the various resolutions we have adopted.

The Ramsar Convention is a key priority for the EU Member States. During this COP, we have taken significant steps toward ensuring the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention's objectives, largely thanks to the host country. Furthermore, in an increasingly challenging geopolitical context, we have demonstrated that the international community can still reach consensus on issues of shared concern and that multilateralism can yield positive results. We hope this will inspire other forthcoming negotiations on biodiversity.

On the Draft Resolution text, we simply have a proposal for a factual clarification in paragraph 3, which should read: “NOTING the outcomes of the high-level segment of COP15, which was organized by the host country under its own initiative, with the adoption of the “Victoria Falls Declaration” by ministers present; and.”

23.26 Draft resolution on Extension of implementation of the Resolution XIV.20 “The Ramsar Convention’s response to environmental emergency in Ukraine relating to the damage of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) stemming from the Russian Federation’s aggression

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the work of the Secretariat in assessing the damage to Ukrainian Ramsar sites and advising on appropriate mitigation and restoration measures, and we thank the Secretariat for its report, which we will take under consideration. We also appreciate the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America’s voluntary financial contributions to the Secretariat in this work.

We recognize the negative environmental impacts the war has had on the affected wetlands, and that the damage is ongoing and could develop further.

We support the approval of the Draft Resolution, agreeing with the need for continued focus on the environmental damage to Ukrainian wetlands stemming from the Russian aggression, which is ongoing and could develop further.

I speak on behalf of the EU Member States.

As written in the draft resolution the EU Member States acknowledge the findings of the final assessment report submitted to COP15, which underscores the longer-term need for a comprehensive environmental monitoring program to accurately determine the full-range and degree of damage inflicted upon Ukraine’s Wetlands of International Importance in view of the deteriorating situation due to the ongoing war.

Therefore, we see a need to continue the assessment work so we can monitor the continuing environmental damage in Ukraine and have voted YES. We thank the contracting parties for adopting this resolution.