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11th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Quito, Ecuador, 4-9 November 2014

Agenda Item 18.1

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Summary:

This document reports on the recommendations of a Standing Committee Working Group that considered organizational changes for Meetings of the Conference of the Parties. The Standing Committee accepted all of the Working Group's recommendations. This document also includes comments on several of those recommendations, as well as additional recommendations, from the Secretariat.

Recommendations relate to, *inter alia*, the length of meetings, credentials, regional discussions, and the provision of documents.

These recommendations are included in a draft Resolution in an Annex to this document, which the Conference of the Parties is invited to consider for adoption.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

(Prepared by the UNEP/CMS Secretariat on behalf of the Standing Committee)

Introduction

1. At its 40th Meeting in November 2012, the Standing Committee established a Working Group to consider organizational changes for the COP. The Working Group submitted its conclusions and recommendations to the 41st Meeting of the Standing Committee in UNEP/CMS/StC41/11/Annex I. The Standing Committee accepted all of the Working Group's recommendations.

2. The Working Group considered principles for organizing and running Meetings of the Conference of the Parties as well as 13 proposals to improve the organizing and running of those meetings. These issues relate to prioritization of scheduling meetings, documentation, credentials, and other issues. These issues are summarized below and incorporated into the draft Resolution annexed to this document.

Principles for Organizing and Running the Conference of the Parties

3. Article VII, paragraph 1 of the Convention establishes the Conference of the Parties as “the decision-making organ of this Convention” and establishes legally binding conditions that the Conference of the Parties must implement. To assist the Conference of the Parties implement its duties, the Standing Committee agreed on five principles for organizing and running a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties relating to the purposes of such Meetings, budgetary responsibility, thorough preparation, representation and participation, and communication. These principles are included in paragraph 1 of the draft Resolution.

Specific Proposals

4. *Uploading documents six weeks before a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.* The Standing Committee agreed to resolve this issue through the Rules of Procedure, discussed in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.18.2.

5. *Encouraging regional discussions, by email or teleconference, in advance of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.* The Standing Committee noted that Resolution 9.15, paragraph 5(a), already requires members of the Standing Committee “to maintain a fluid and permanent communication with Parties in their region and the Secretariat”. Recognizing the value of regional communication, the Standing Committee recommended that such communication continue during a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It also noted that this communication could be enhanced through a Bureau meeting on the morning before the first day of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, by Bureau members reporting back to regional meetings that same afternoon, and by holding regular regional meetings during the Meeting. These recommendations are included in paragraphs 2(a) and 2(b) of the draft Resolution.

6. The Secretariat understands the underlying premise of the Standing Committee recommendation with respect to the morning Bureau meeting and afternoon regional meetings held the day before the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties: to have the Bureau meet first with Bureau members than reporting back to the regional meetings. However, the

Secretariat believes that the timing of these meetings is unduly prescriptive, may be difficult to achieve in practice, and other options may be more practical. For example, if Standing Committee members become members of the Bureau, then it may be more practical to have the Bureau meeting immediately after the Standing Committee meeting, which could be in the evening rather than in the morning. Paragraph 2 is qualified with the words “when feasible.” Nonetheless, it may be useful to eliminate references to the specific day on which the Bureau and regional meetings will take place. The provision could provide that, when feasible, the Bureau will meet prior to regional meetings and that both of these meetings will take place before commencement of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

7. *Monitoring the quality of translations.* The Standing Committee commented on the quality of translated documents and interpretation services. It agreed that the Secretariat should continue to monitor the quality of these services and provide feedback to the Bureau. These recommendations are included in paragraph 5(f) of the draft Resolution.

8. *Preparing a clearer agenda with document numbers linked to agenda items.* The Standing Committee reported that the new system of linking document numbers to agenda item numbers should continue. This recommendation is included in paragraph 5(a) of the draft Resolution.

9. *Providing documents on a memory stick.* The Standing Committee agreed on a number of recommendations to facilitate the provision of documents at Meetings of the Conference of the Parties. These recommendations include the provision of 1) documents on a USB memory stick for a meeting to reduce the requirement for printed copies of papers (and a way to update the USB stick during the meeting, 2) documents in both MS Word and PDF formats, 3) a “quicklink” to in-session documents, and 4) adequate internet service. These recommendations are included in paragraphs 5(b)–(e) of the draft Resolution.

10. The Secretariat notes, however, that the provision of documents on a USB memory stick has budget impacts and may not necessarily be the most effective way to ensure that Parties are prepared for meetings. As stated in the Working Group’s report to the Standing Committee, Parties come to the meetings with an official brief of their positions. In other words, they have already read the documents and presumably already have electronic copies of the documents. Moreover, the Working Group has proposed an early deadline for placement of documents online. A requirement to provide documents on a USB memory stick seems unnecessary in light of this early deadline.

11. Similarly, the Secretariat notes that the development of a facility for updating the USB memory stick during the Meeting is not a simple technological fix. Perhaps a more efficient way to ensure that Parties are aware of new documents is for the Secretariat to announce at the beginning of each session which new documents have been posted to the “in-session quicklink”.

12. *Holding meetings back to back with the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.* The Standing Committee agreed that holding meetings back to back with Meetings of the Conference of the Parties places undue burdens on the Secretariat as it must prepare for two or more meetings. In addition, the Standing Committee was not convinced that efficiency increased due to this practice. As such, it discouraged the practice of holding back-to-back meetings. This recommendation is included in paragraph 3 of the draft Resolution.

13. *Parties to develop Resolutions.* The Standing Committee was invited to consider a proposal that Parties play a greater role in proposing and drafting Resolutions, a role that could increase their direct involvement in the work of the Convention. The Standing Committee noted that nothing prevents the Parties from proposing Resolutions. It further noted that Article IX of the Convention grants the Secretariat the authority to prepare Resolutions. The Standing Committee concluded that additional participation in the work of the Convention could be encouraged but not required. No specific provision is included in the draft Resolution on this issue.

14. *Special meeting of the Standing Committee to clear documents.* The Standing Committee considered whether a teleconference or online meeting of the Standing Committee should be held to comment on and clear documents prior to a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Standing Committee agreed that this issue should be addressed in the paper proposing new Rules of Procedure for Meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

15. *Heads of Delegation meeting.* The Standing Committee considered whether a Heads of Delegation meeting should be convened on the eve of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Standing Committee agreed that the regional meetings discussed in paragraph 5 above would allow the objectives of a Heads of Delegation meeting to be met without imposing additional costs. Thus, the Standing Committee agreed to postpone discussion of this issue until issues relating to regional coordination by Standing Committee members had been considered.

16. *Shorter and rationalized opening sessions.* To improve the efficiency of meetings, the Standing Committee agreed that the opening ceremony should include fewer and shorter speeches, include administrative matters, and be no more than two hours long. This recommendation is included in paragraph 2(c) of the draft Resolution.

17. *Extension of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties by one or two days.* The Standing Committee considered whether to add one or two days to the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The extension would allow the Secretariat a full day to compile Resolutions before they are considered for adoption by the Parties in a final plenary session. During the day that the Secretariat finalized draft Resolutions, the Parties would have an excursion or social event. Reflecting on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness and budgetary considerations, the Standing Committee rejected this idea.

18. *Side events and working group meetings.* The Standing Committee considered the question of how to make side events available to as many representatives as possible while also providing time for Working Groups to meet. The Standing Committee recalled that the primary purpose of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties was to complete the business of the Meeting. As such, side events are of secondary importance, and meetings of the subsidiary bodies should be given priority for scheduling and venues. The Standing Committee also recommended that key side events be scheduled early in the meeting to avoid potential clashes with meetings of subsidiary bodies, and side events that support significant issues to be addressed by the Conference of the Parties should be given priority among side events. These recommendations are included in paragraph 4 of the draft Resolution.

19. *Timing for provision of credentials.* The Standing Committee acknowledged that the timely receipt of valid credentials has been a significant problem resulting in high and unnecessary workloads for the Secretariat and the Credentials Committee. To facilitate the

work of validating credentials, the Standing Committee requested representatives to submit electronic copies of their credentials to the Secretariat prior to the meeting. This would allow the Secretariat to identify any potential problems prior to the meeting. The Standing Committee also encouraged sponsored delegates, where possible, to forward their credentials prior to tickets and travel authorizations being issued by the Secretariat. The Standing Committee emphasized, however, that original credentials must still be submitted at the start of the meeting of the Conference of the Parties. These recommendations are included in paragraph 7 of the draft Resolution.

20. The Secretariat notes that the Standing Committee did not include a deadline by which representatives should transmit electronic copies of credentials to the Secretariat. The Secretariat recommends that representatives transmit these electronic copies at least one week before the opening of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat has added this language to the recommendation included in paragraph 7 of the draft Resolution.

21. Because of the crucial importance of submitting valid credentials and to avoid confusion as to which rules apply, the Secretariat included in paragraph 6 of the draft Resolution the rules concerning credentials from the Rules of Procedure (UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.4). The Secretariat has proposed some additional text to the Rules of Procedure to make clear that scans and photocopies are not acceptable. As a result, paragraph 6(b) of the draft Resolution includes two alternatives. When considering the draft Resolution below, the Parties should adopt the text as approved by the Conference of the Parties in the Rules of Procedure.

Date and Venue of Meetings of the Conference of the Parties

22. The Parties have historically thanked the Party hosting a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in a Resolution. In the same Resolution, the Parties have provided a deadline for Parties to express an interest in hosting the next Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and for the Standing Committee to review the offers and decide upon the most suitable venue.

23. The Standing Committee Working Group did not consider this issue. The Secretariat, however, believes that a standing procedure, embodied in a Resolution, that sets out the process for accepting invitations to host a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and for reviewing and accepting such invitations, would simplify the process. Also, by repealing now the previous ten Resolutions on this matter, the Parties will simplify the task of the Secretariat to propose Resolutions for repeal and to create a register of Resolutions in effect, which has been proposed in UNEP/CMS/COP11/Doc.18.2.

24. If the Parties adopt this proposal, they can express their gratitude to the host Party in their closing comments, comments that will be recorded in the *Proceedings* of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Action requested:

The Conference of the Parties is invited to consider the draft Resolution for adoption.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Recalling Article VII, paragraph 3, of the Convention, which states that the Secretariat shall “convene ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Parties at intervals of not more than three years, unless the Conference decides otherwise”; and

Recognizing the benefits that may accrue to the Convention and to Parties from hosting meetings of the Conference of the Parties in different regions of the world;

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

Principles

1. *Decides* that Meetings of the Conference of the Parties shall be guided by the following principles:
 - (a) the purpose of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties is to transact the business required for the implementation and operations of the Convention efficiently and effectively and that side events and other meetings held immediately before or after a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, other than regional meetings on the eve of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, are complementary but secondary to this purpose;
 - (b) a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be constrained in terms of its duration by its available budget but will normally not be fewer than five days in length;
 - (c) efficiency in the organization and running of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be significantly enhanced by thorough preparation and by good communications among the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Parties prior to and during the Meeting;
 - (d) efficiency and effectiveness of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be enhanced through the participation of an active Bureau in guiding the Chairs of Plenary, Committee of the Whole, other Committees and Working Groups, and reporting back by Bureau members to regional meetings during the Meeting; and
 - (e) the Regional Representatives elected to the Standing Committee will convene regional meetings for delegates immediately prior to and during a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to inform them of discussions at the Bureau and to inform the Bureau of the views of the representatives;

Scheduling of Meetings

2. *Recommends* that, when feasible, to help ensure the efficient and effective transaction of the business of the Conference of the Parties:
 - (a) the Bureau meet in the morning on the day before commencement of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
 - (b) the Standing Committee members convene regional meetings during the afternoon of the day before commencement of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and also hold regular regional meetings during the Meeting; and
 - (c) the opening ceremony of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties occur on the first morning of the Meeting, include administrative matters and be of no more than two hours duration;
3. *Discourages* the practice of holding back-to-back meetings with the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
4. *Recommends* that, with respect to side events:
 - (a) the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies (Committee of the Whole, Working Groups, Committees) take priority for scheduling and venues;
 - (b) the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties not be extended in order to allow time for side events;
 - (c) when feasible, key side events be held early in the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to avoid potential clashes with meetings of the Committee of the Whole and other subsidiary bodies;
 - (d) the Secretariat give priority to those events that directly support significant issues to be addressed by the Conference of the Parties;

Documentation

5. *Instructs* the Secretariat:
 - (a) to use a document numbering system whereby document numbers are linked to agenda item numbers;
 - (b) to provide a means for quickly accessing in-session documents through the CMS website;
 - (c) to ensure, through negotiations with the host country, that the internet service provided at the venue has sufficient capacity to meet the anticipated demand from representatives and observers for timely access to web-based documentation of the COP;

- (d) to provide documents in a format that can be edited and not edited (e.g., MS Word and PDF formats);
- (e) to provide to representatives and observers on arrival at the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, when feasible and subject to budgetary constraints, meeting documents on a preloaded USB stick or equivalent media; and
- (f) to monitor the quality of translation and interpretation services and provide feedback to the Bureau;

Credentials

6. *Agrees* on the following rules for the submission of credentials:

- (a) Before exercising voting rights of the Party, the Representative or any Alternative Representative of a Party shall have been granted powers by, or on behalf of, a proper authority, that is to say: the Head of State, the Head of Government, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the head of an executive body of any regional economic organization enabling him/her to represent the Party at the meeting.
- (b) All credentials shall be submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention in their original form, together with a translation into English, French or Spanish if they are not in one of these languages.

alt (b) All credentials shall be submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention in their original form, on letterhead of the official enabling the Representative to participate at the meeting, together with a translation into English, French or Spanish if they are not in one of these languages. Photocopies, scans and faxes of the original letter are invalid.

- (c) A Credentials Committee of not more than five Representatives from at least three regions shall examine submitted credentials and shall report thereon to the meeting.
- (d) Pending a decision on their credentials, representatives may participate provisionally in the meeting, but not vote. If their Credentials are not accepted, representatives of a Party are able to participate in the meeting but not vote.
- (e) Representatives are encouraged to submit their Credentials prior to the meeting to allow efficient processing by the Secretariat and Credentials Committee.

7. *Requests* representatives to transmit electronically (i.e. scan and send) a copy of their credentials to the Secretariat at least one week before commencement of the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to allow preliminary scrutiny prior to the meeting;

8. *Requests* sponsored delegates, when possible, to forward their credentials as described in paragraphs 7 prior to tickets and travel authorizations being issued by the Secretariat.

Date and Venue of Future Meetings of the Conference of the Parties

9. *Invites* Parties as well as non-Parties that may have an interest in hosting a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (and the associated meeting(s) of the Standing Committee), to

inform the Secretariat of their interest no later 180 days from the conclusion of a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

10. *Instructs* the Standing Committee at its first meeting following the date for informing the Secretariat of an interest to host a Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to review the offers received and, subject to receipt of sufficient information, to decide upon the most suitable venue(s); and

11. *Repeals* Resolution 1.8, Resolution 2.1, Resolution 3.8, Resolution 4.7, Resolution 5.8, Resolution 6.10, Resolution 7.14, Resolution 8.20 (paragraphs 2 and 3), Resolution 9.17, and Resolution 10.20.