



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 – 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 16.1

ScS-SC8 CRP 4.1

SESSIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(Prepared by the Secretariat and the Scientific Council)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decision 14.5.

This document also provides information for Parties on the appointment of the Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Scientific Council and its Sessional Committee.

The work of the Scientific Councillors supports implementation of most of the targets of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species, particularly Target 5.3.

SESSIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Background

Subject areas of COP-appointed Councillors

1. COP14 adopted the following Decision:

14.5 Directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested, with support from the Secretariat, to review the existing COP-Appointed Councillor subject areas and propose to COP15 any changes for the subsequent period between COP15 and COP17, as appropriate.

2. The COP-appointed Councillor subject areas were significantly amended at each Conference of the Parties from COP1 up until COP6 in 1999, after which subject areas became fairly static, with only minor modifications to some subject areas at each COP. Four new subject areas were identified between COP6 and COP10: African Fauna, Fish and Bycatch at COP8 in 2005, and Climate Change at COP10 in 2011 (an overview of all subject areas since COP1 is provided in Annex 2, paragraph 3 of document [UNEP/CMS/COP13/Doc.15.1](#)).
3. The Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, at its 3rd meeting (ScC-SC3, 2018), decided to undertake a review of the areas of expertise of COP-appointed Councillors and established an intersessional working group that reported to ScC-SC4 (2019). The ScC-SC presented its recommendations to COP13 in 2020. On that basis, COP13 decided on the following subject areas for COP-appointed councillors: Aquatic Mammals, Birds, Bycatch, Climate Change, Connectivity/Networks, Fish, Invasive Species (including disease, feral animals, insects, and marine pests and weeds), Marine Pollution and Terrestrial Mammals. The responsibility for the subject areas of Birds, Terrestrial Mammals and Fish has been shared by two Councillors since COP13.

Composition of the Scientific Council and its Sessional Committee

4. Each Party is entitled to appoint one member of the Scientific Council (Art. VIII, para. 2 of the Convention). These Party-appointed Councillors are appointed for an unlimited period, until they step down or they are replaced by the Party that appointed them.
5. Article VIII, paragraph 2 of the Convention states that "...the Scientific Council shall include as members qualified experts selected and appointed by the Conference of the Parties; the number of these experts, the criteria for their selection and the terms of their appointments shall be as determined by the Conference of the Parties". These experts are called 'COP-appointed Councillors'.
6. COP-appointed Councillors are appointed at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Art. VIII, para. 2 of the Convention) for the subsequent triennium. Their appointment can be renewed; however, re-appointment is not automatic and has to be confirmed by each meeting of the COP.
7. [Resolution 12.4 \(Rev. COP14\)](#) set forth the structure and the composition of a Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, to make the work of the Scientific Council more effective. The Committee is composed of COP-appointed Councillors and regionally-selected Party-appointed Councillors (regional representatives), appointed at each ordinary meeting of the COP on the basis of a recommendation from the Secretariat and in consultation with the Standing Committee.

8. As per paragraph 5 of Resolution 12.4 (Rev. COP14), "...unless otherwise decided by the COP, the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council is composed of:
 - a) nine COP-appointed Councillors with expertise in taxonomic and thematic issues; and
 - b) fifteen Party-appointed members selected within the Standing Committee geographic regions, as follows: three from Africa, three from Asia, three from Europe, three from Oceania, three from South and Central America and the Caribbean."
9. In accordance with Resolution 12.4 (Rev. COP14), Sessional Committee members shall normally be nominated for a minimum term of two triennia. Each ordinary meeting of the COP should decide upon the renewal of half¹ of the Party-appointed membership of the Sessional Committee.
10. Resolution 12.4 also recommends, in paragraph 7, that the COP "identify from the pool of Party-appointed Councillors up to three alternate members for each region, who could replace permanently or temporarily a regular member from the region not in a position to continue to serve on the Sessional Committee in the intersessional period".
11. Resolution 12.4 *Scientific Council*, paragraph 9, further requests the Secretariat to "provide for a consultative process, including Party, scientific and expert advice, in order to elaborate its recommendation in consultation with the Standing Committee to the Conference of the Parties on the composition of the Sessional Committee".

Subject areas of COP-appointed Councillors

12. ScC-SC7 (2024) discussed the subject areas (under agenda item 4.1) based on document [UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC7/Doc.4.1/Rev.1](#), and agreed that the current COP-appointed Councillor subject areas were all important and recommended that they should be continued, with only a change of name for one area: from 'Invasive species, disease, feral animals, insects, and marine pests and weeds' to 'Wildlife Health'.

Appointment of COP-appointed members of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council

13. Table 1 below lists the current COP-appointed Councillors and their subject areas, and the recommendations of the Scientific Council to COP15 (including the proposed change to the title of one of the subject areas).

¹ Due to the odd number of Party-appointed members (15) on the Sessional Committee, this may be 7 or 8.

Table 1: Overview of the COP-appointed Councillors and their subject areas after COP14 and recommendations to COP15

Subject area	COP-appointed Councillor	Recommendation to COP15
Aquatic Mammals	Ms. Vanesa Patricia Tossenberger	Appoint Ms. Vanesa Patricia Tossenberger for the next triennium
Birds	Dr. Rob P. Clay ²	Appoint Dr. Rob P. Clay ² for the next triennium
Birds	Prof. Stephen Garnett ²	Appoint Prof. Stephen Garnett ² for the next triennium
Bycatch	Dr. Barry G. Baker	Appoint Dr. Barry G. Baker for the next triennium
Climate Change	Prof. Des B.A. Thompson, PhD	Appoint Prof. Des B.A. Thompson PhD for the next triennium
Connectivity/Network	Dr. Fernando Spina	Appoint Dr. Fernando Spina for the next triennium
Fish	Dr. Zeb S. Hogan (freshwater) ³	Appoint Dr. Zeb S. Hogan ³ for the next triennium
Fish	Dr. Rima Jabado (marine) ³	Appoint Dr. Rima Jabado ³ for the next triennium
Invasive species, disease, feral animals, insects, and marine pests and weeds <u>Wildlife Health</u>	Dr. Ruth Cromie	Vacant after the closure of COP15; ScC-SC8 is invited to make recommendations to COP on filling this position
Marine Pollution	Mr. Mark P. Simmonds	Appoint Mr. Mark P. Simmonds for the next triennium
Terrestrial Mammals	Prof. Alfred Oteng-Yeboah	Appoint Prof. Alfred Oteng-Yeboah for the next triennium

14. The current COP-appointed Councillor for Invasive species, disease, feral animals, insects, and marine pests and weeds has informed the Secretariat that she intends to step down from her position at COP15, after having served for two terms of office.
15. The Secretariat issued a call for nominations for the vacancy on 17 November 2025 as [Notification 2025/31](#) and will issue an addendum to this document to provide an update on potential candidates.
16. As part of the consultative process, as set out in paragraph 9 of Resolution 12.4 *Scientific Council*, ScC-SC8 (December 2025) will provide its recommendations for this position.
17. The current COP-appointed Councillors for all remaining subject areas have expressed an interest in continuing their work following COP15. The Scientific Council and COP15 are invited to consider their re-appointment for the intersessional period after COP15.
18. ScC-SC8 considered the candidates for the position of the COP-appointed Councillor for Health as presented in Addendum 1 to this document. It concluded that all five candidates are eligible and well qualified for this position.

² Councillors Clay and Garnett share responsibility for birds, which counts as a single position.

³ Councillors Hogan and Jabado share responsibility for fish, which counts as a single position.

Two candidates, Craig Stephen and Chris Walzer, were considered to offer exceptional scientific credentials and broad understanding of the importance of a holistic approach to health. Both are already active members of the CMS Working Group on Migratory Species and Health and are thus familiar with the work of the Convention. Craig Stephen, Executive Director McEachran Institute, has already co-authored the two recent reports of the Working Group and Chris Walzer, Global Executive Director Health, Wildlife Conservation Society, offers familiarity with dealing with One Health within a conservation context.

18-19. Given the high volume of work related to Terrestrial Mammals, ScC-SC8 and COP15 may wish to consider whether the position of the COP-appointed Councillor for Mammals should be shared by two councillors in the intersessional period between COP15 and COP16, following the practice before COP14, with the understanding that this would count as a single position.

19-20. ScC-SC8 considered this matter and agreed that given the high volume of work related to Terrestrial Mammals, it would be beneficial to have this position shared by two councillors. It requested the Secretariat to call for candidate nominations through a Notification. ScC-SC8 further requested the Secretariat to seek opinions from the Sessional Committee members on nominations via email exchange and make the candidate profiles, as well as any comments from the Sessional Committee, available to the COP for a decision.

Appointment of the regional representative Sessional Committee members

20-21. Table 2 below lists the current serving regional representatives on the ScC-SC, and the triennium for which they were first appointed.

21-22. Eleven of the current regional representatives will have completed at least two terms by the time of COP15 (see the highlighted rows in the table below).

22-23. Two regional representatives will have completed one term and should be considered for renewal.

23-24. Fiji informed the Secretariat that Ms. Senivasa Waqairamasi from Oceania has stepped down from her position, which is now vacant.

24-25. Costa Rica informed the Secretariat that Mr Carlos Mario Orrego Vásquez has stepped down from his position, which is now vacant.

25-26. One of the regional positions for African has been vacant throughout the intersessional period between COP14 and COP15.

Table 2: Overview of regional representative Sessional Committee members

Current regional representative Sessional Committee members				
Region	Scientific Councillor	Appointed by	Triennium of first appointment to Sessional Committee	No. of terms of service
Africa	Mr. Stephen Okiror	Uganda	COP13-COP14	2

	Prof. Dr. Edson Gandiwa	Zimbabwe	COP13-COP14	2
	vacant			
Asia	Dr. Sathyakumar Sambandam	India	COP14-COP15	1
	Mr. Daniel Fernando	Sri Lanka	COP12-COP13	3
	Mr. Askar Davletbakov, PhD	Kyrgyz Republic	COP13-COP14	2
Europe	Dr. João José de Bastos Loureiro	Portugal	COP13-COP14	2
	Mr. Ruben Moreno-Opo Diaz-Meco	Spain	COP13-COP14	2
	Dr. Daliborka Stankovic	Serbia	COP13-COP14	2
Oceania	Ms. Narelle Montgomery	Australia	COP12-COP13	3
	Mr. Graeme Taylor	New Zealand	COP11-COP12	4
	vacant			
South & Central America and the Caribbean	vacant			
	Mr. Andrei Langeloh Roos	Brazil	COP14-COP15	1
	Dr. Héctor Samuel Vera Alcaraz	Paraguay	COP12-COP13	2

26-27. As decided by the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee, proposed candidates for regional representatives should be identified through a consultation process among the Parties in the regions, coordinated by the relevant members of the Standing Committee. Regions are then expected to submit their recommendations on the candidates to COP.

27-28. The Secretariat also approached the members of the African, Oceania and South & Central America and the Caribbean regions, informing them about the vacant positions for regional representatives in their respective regions, and recommended that these positions be filled by an alternate member ahead of ScC-SC8, in line with Rule 2 i) of the Rules of Procedure of the CMS Scientific Council and its Sessional Committee.

Appointment of the regional representative Sessional Committee alternate members

28-29. The COP is also expected to appoint, from among the Party-appointed Councillors, up to three alternate members for each region. There is no limit on the length of tenure for this role. Only two regions have appointed alternates. Mr Simon Nemtsov recently resigned from his position as an alternate for Europe. The current list of alternates is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of regional representative Sessional Committee alternate members

Current alternate members of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council		
Region	Scientific Councillor	Appointed by
Africa	Mr. Kahsay Gebretensae Asgedom	Ethiopia
	Mr. Selby Remie	Seychelles
	vacant	
Asia	vacant	
	vacant	
	vacant	
Europe	Dr. Jean-Philippe Siblet	France
	Mr. James M. Williams	United Kingdom
	vacant	
Oceania	vacant	

	vacant	
	vacant	
South & Central America and the Caribbean	vacant	
	vacant	
	vacant	

[29-30.](#) In identifying proposed candidates for regional representatives, Parties should keep in mind the provisions of [Resolution 14.2](#), paragraph 10, which stipulate that representatives from countries with contributions in arrears of three years or more should be excluded from holding office in Convention bodies. The status of contributions can be found on the [CMS website](#).

[30-31.](#) It should be assumed that candidates proposed by Parties that are not eligible for funding to attend the Convention’s meetings have the means to participate in the meetings of the Sessional Committee, either through their own institution or the government of the Party that appointed them.

Membership of the Scientific Council

[31-32.](#) In the intersessional period between COP13 and COP14, the Secretariat updated the contact details of the CMS Scientific Council members. In 2025, the Secretariat requested the National Focal Points to update the email addresses of Scientific Councillors that were no longer in use. The Secretariat also approached Parties without a representative in the Scientific Council, encouraging them to nominate a member. The [list of Scientific Council members](#) was updated accordingly. Parties are invited to inform the Secretariat of any updates in their Scientific Council membership or their contact details.

Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Council and its Sessional Committee

[32-33.](#) The second term of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the ScC will come to an end at COP15. After the conclusion of COP15, the Secretariat will support the Sessional Committee in electing a new Chair and Vice-Chair, in line with the Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat also proposes to convene an informal meeting of elected ScC-SC members who are present at COP15, to be held at the conclusion of the COP15.

Recommended actions

[33-34.](#) The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:

- a) after consultation within regional groups, appoint the regional members and alternates of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council for the intersessional period between COP15 and COP16, in accordance with Resolution 12.4; and
- b) appoint the COP-appointed Councillors.