The Inter-State Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) met in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan from 24 to 26 May and approved a number of decisions including one where they welcomed the Ramsar Secretariat and other partner organizations to develop and implement national and regional project on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Central Asia.

This is an important decision since the ICSD is the main intergovernmental body that coordinates and manages regional cooperation on environment and sustainable development in the five Central Asia countries. Each country has three representatives on ICSD, including the head of the environmental agency, the deputy minister of economy and a representative from the scientific community. The ICSD meeting in Ashgabat was also attended by representatives from UN agencies (e.g. UNEP, UNDP), donor agencies (e.g. EU, GIZ), regional environmental organizations (e.g. Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia or CAREC) and by other relevant organizations and experts.

Previously, relatively less attention has been paid to wetland conservation in Central Asia but the decision approved by ICSD will now provide high level support and momentum for projects and activities on wetlands to be developed. A number of the Central Asian countries have already submitted a proposal to develop a Ramsar regional initiative for Central Asia and this will act as a platform for future regional cooperation on wetland conservation issues. The Ramsar Secretariat has also been working with partners, such as IUCN and CAREC to develop funding proposals for regional wetland projects and are now looking for potential funders to support these projects.

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