

Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the annual reports submitted by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) for 2022 in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*;
- ii. note the allocation of funds from the 2023 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” proposed in document SC62 Doc.8.1, to provide start-up funding to a newly established Initiative for its activities in 2023, as follows:
 - CHF 30,000 to the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative;
- iii. consider the proposal for a new Ramsar Regional Initiative, the International Mangrove Centre (IMC), within the framework of the Convention in accordance with Resolution XIV.19; and
- iv. take note that a call for proposals for new RRIs has been made in accordance with Resolution XIV.7, with a deadline for responses of 30 September 2023; and that the Secretariat will report the result of the call to the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting.

Background

1. At its 14th meeting (COP14, 2022), in paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.7 Part A on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, the Conference of the Contracting Parties recalled that RRIs “which include regional centres for training and capacity building and regional networks to facilitate cooperation, are intended as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the Convention in specific geographic regions, through voluntary international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern”.
2. Through Resolution XIV.7 Part B, COP14 endorsed the following 20 RRIs, as operating in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands until COP15:

Four Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building:

- Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
- Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)
- Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA)
- Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA); and

Sixteen Ramsar networks for regional cooperation:

- Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin
- Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia
- Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative
- Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet)
- Carpathian Wetland Ramsar Regional Initiative (CWI)
- Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (NorBalWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet)
- The Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI)

Progress by the 20 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2022

3. Through the *Operation Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention* in the Annex of Resolution XIV.7, RRIs are requested to submit to the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, annual financial and progress reports regarding the implementation of their workplan, using the format in Annex 3 of the same Resolution. Contracting Parties also instruct the Secretariat in paragraph 14 of Resolution XIV.7 to “provide the COP and Standing Committee a summary of the information obtained from the annual reports to assist these bodies in their reviews of RRIs and decisions regarding funding”.
4. The coordinators of RRIs were requested to submit the report of progress of work in 2022 and planned work for 2023, including a financial overview, to the Secretariat by 20 January 2023. These reports are available here:
[https://www.ramsar.org/search?sort_bef_combine=search_api_relevance_DESC&f\[\]=bodies_and_events%3A2723&f\[\]=-document_type%3A2908&f\[\]=-search_date%3A2023&f\[0\]=type%3Adocument&f\[1\]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f\[2\]=field_sort_date%3A2023](https://www.ramsar.org/search?sort_bef_combine=search_api_relevance_DESC&f[]=bodies_and_events%3A2723&f[]=-document_type%3A2908&f[]=-search_date%3A2023&f[0]=type%3Adocument&f[1]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f[2]=field_sort_date%3A2023).
5. The Secretariat sent reminders to the RRI coordinators, requesting them to submit annual reports, and followed up bilaterally with each of them. Annual reports were received from 17 RRIs. The following RRIs did not submit annual reports within the required deadlines:
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).
6. Failure by RRIs to submit annual report has been increasing in recent years. Table 1 below indicates RRIs that have not submitted a report in one of the last five years.

Table 1: RRI that have not submitted a report, 2019-2023

RRI	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
WACoWet				X	X
SenegalWet				X	X
CREHO		X		X	
High Andean Wetlands			X	X	
BlackSeaWet					X

7. WACoWet and SenegalWet did not submit their annual report for 2021-2022, after they had received the first tranche of funding from the Convention allocated from the core budget in 2021 (SenegalWet) and African voluntary contribution fund in 2020 (WACoWet). For this reason, the Secretariat did not disburse the second and final instalments to these RRIs in 2022.
8. RRIs are encouraged to submit their annual reports in the next reporting cycle in line with subparagraph 12.e) of Resolution XIV.7.
9. The Secretariat reviewed the annual reports submitted by 17 RRIs and prepared a summary based on their ongoing activities. Annex 1 of the present document presents an overview of the reports submitted.
10. According to the reports, most RRIs play an important role in bringing the member Contracting Parties together to promote regional cooperation:
 - Most RRIs have held at least one coordination meeting during the year.
 - Most RRIs organized or supported CEPA activities in the region, including World Wetlands Day celebrations.
 - Few RRIs conducted regional policy studies or assessments on thematic areas, including climate change, invasive species, and Ramsar Site management.
 - Most RRIs have engaged in fundraising activities such as writing funding proposals or establishing sustainable financing platforms.
 - Two RRIs have been providing regular training courses for wetland managers in their region.
11. The total annual expenditure of RRIs in 2022 is estimated at CHF 2.7 million. This is a slight decrease from CHF 2.9 million in 2021.¹ Six RRIs have reported an annual expenditure of over 100,000 CHF, while five RRIs have reported an annual expenditure of less than 2,000 CHF (this does not include the three RRIs that have not submitted annual reports this year).
12. Commonly recognized challenges identified from the reports were limited financial resources, delay in implementing activities due to COVID-19 restrictions, and lack of coordination due to a rotating coordination scheme. In 2022, however, RRIs were beginning to hold more face-to-face meetings which led to a higher expenditure rate from 76% in 2021 to 79% in 2022.²
13. The Secretariat has been encouraging more dialogues among RRIs to promote learning from each other. As one of the first activities during COP14, the Secretary General met coordinators of RRIs. The Secretariat also organized a virtual annual planning meeting of RRIs on 24 January

¹ Based on annual actual expenditure reported by RRIs (for those reported in a currency other than CHF, the annual average exchange rate for 2022 was applied).

² Expenditure rate refers to annual income (including income carried over from previous years) in relation to actual expenditure.

2023. This was the first time that RRIs had the opportunity to share their annual plans with other RRIs and identify possible areas of cooperation.

14. Some RRIs have already taken steps toward regional cooperation. Europe is working toward the establishment of a coalition of European Ramsar Regional Initiatives. In Asia, RRIs are becoming members of other RRIs, while one RRI has provided financial support to another RRI.

Allocation of Convention core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2023

15. In paragraph 17 of Resolution XIV.7, the Conference of the Parties notes that “RRIs that have been endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention are eligible for start-up financial support from the core budget of the Convention” and recommends that “the start-up financial support is to be provided for up to six years, according to decisions on budgetary matters”. Through paragraph 18 of the same Resolution, Contracting Parties decided “that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to eligible RRIs will be determined annually by the Standing Committee”, based on the annual report submitted by the RRI to the Secretariat, and “informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance to the Standing Committee”.
16. For 2022, there were no requests for core budget support, as all RRIs that were eligible to receive financial support had already received the allowable support from the core budget. Through Decision SC59/2022-09, the Standing Committee approved the proposal for a new RRI in the Southern African Development Community Region, and the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI) was endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention and was further endorsed during COP14 through Resolution XIV.7 Part B.
17. Through the annual report, SARRI has requested 30,000 CHF from the Convention core budget to support its activities in 2023.

Proposals for new RRIs

18. Through paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.19 on *Proposal to establish an International Mangrove Centre (a Ramsar Regional Initiative)*, Contracting Parties welcomed the proposal by the People’s Republic of China and interested Contracting Parties to establish an RRI (the “International Mangrove Centre”) and invited submission of the proposed RRI to the 62nd Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC62) for consideration.
19. The Secretariat received on 30 April 2023 from the People’s Republic of China a proposal, in line with Annex 2 of Resolution XIV.7, on the establishment of the International Mangrove Center (IMC) as a Ramsar Regional Initiative. The proposal can be found at this link: <https://www.ramsar.org/document/ramsar-regional-initiative-proposal-form-international-mangrove-centre>.
20. The proposal was evaluated by the Secretariat using the criteria in Resolution XIV.7 and the *Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives*. The evaluation result is that the IMC meets the requirements outlined in the *Operational Guidelines*. The Secretariat has received three letters of support from Contracting Parties at the time of drafting of this document (early June 2023). The proposal for the RRI indicates that more such letters of support will be received before SC62. Annex 2 presents a summary of the evaluation of the proposal.

21. The Secretariat requests that the Standing Committee at its 62nd meeting consider the International Mangrove Centre for endorsement as operating within the framework of the Convention, should a sufficient number of letters of support be received from Contracting Parties in the pantropic region by the start of SC62.
22. Paragraph 27 of Resolution XIV.7 instructs the Secretariat to open calls for proposals for new RRIs, to be endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or intersessionally by the Standing Committee. The Secretariat sent Parties a diplomatic note (Note 2023/3) on 3 April 2023 inviting the submission of proposals by 30 September 2023 for new RRIs to be formally recognized during the period of the 2023-2025 triennium. The Secretariat plans to report on the result of the call for proposals to the Standing Committee at SC63.
23. In connection with the call for proposals for new RRIs, the Secretariat has begun working with the International Organization Partners, to identify opportunities for promoting the establishment of RRIs in parts of the world where there are currently no RRIs and where there is currently limited wetland management capacity, as requested by paragraph 9 of Resolution XIV.7.

Annex 1
Summary of the annual reports of RRIs for 2022-2023

Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) and year of establishment	Principles from Resolution XIII.9					Planned budget for 2022 (CHF unless stated)	Expenditure in 2022 (CHF unless stated)	Financial resources	Key activities	Challenges
	No. of countries supporting the RRI	TORs (incl. ROPs)	Structure and governance	Status/role of the Convention Secretariat	Financial management					
Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), 2009	5	Yes	Governing Council is the policy-making body. The RAMCEA Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day activities and reports to the Governing Council.	Observer	Responsibility of RAMCEA Secretariat. The Collaborative Management Board reviews annual reports and approves the budget and financial regulations. The Secretariat executes the budget.	120,000	39,473	Government of Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAMCEA Governing Council held - Supported COP14 participation, including organizing side event / exhibition - Globwetland Africa toolbox training for 3 countries (Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania) - CEPA material publication 	Administrative and resource mobilization challenges
Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO), 1999	30	Yes	Governance Body is the Board of Directors (responsible for all financial, administrative and operational decisions).	Permanent. Member of the Board of Directors	Responsibility of the Board to approve budget and oversee financial management.	260,698	139,457	Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CSF), Empresa Education First (EFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of project “Guaranteeing the Water Security in Santa Maria River Mountain Forests and Wetlands” - Implementation of project “Governance and Green Infrastructure to Mitigate Impact in Parita Bay, Panama” - CEPA programme for students 	Resource mobilization and financial stability

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Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA), 2002	18 (15 Contracting Parties and 3 Non-CPs)	Yes	Administrative bodies are the Collaborative Management Board (CMB) and the RRC-CWA Secretariat. The CMB provides strategic guidance, approves programmes/activities, approves budget and financial regulation, and HR issues.	Collaborative Management Board Member	Collaborative Management Board reviews annual reports and approves the budget and financial regulations.	368,550	33,670	Department of Environment (I.R. Iran), National Environment Fund	- 11 capacity-building workshops - 1 study tour for Qatari experts - Support to 20 provinces in I.R. Iran to celebrate WWD	Legal status of Center, challenge in receiving international funds
Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA), 2009	18	Yes	The Steering Committee provides guidance in the development of policies and programmes. The Executive Director leads the day-to-day operations.	Steering Committee member	Reported to Steering Committee.	1,251,744	784,380	Ministry of Environment (Republic of Korea), Suncheon City, Amore-Pacific	- Training of Wetland Managers (regional, sub-regional, national), development of Eco-DRR guidance - Organization of WLI-Asia Conference - RRC-EA Wetland Fund - WWD activities in the Republic of Korea - CEPA activities (website, web magazine, documentary production)	No mention

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Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet), 2009	13	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the WACoWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Procedure Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet), 2006	9	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the NigerWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	None	None	None	N/A	N/A

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Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (HAW), 2005	8	Yes	The Coordination Committee (National Focal Points of member countries) has annual meetings to follow up the implementation of the strategy and its action plan.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of the Coordination Committee).	None	None	Wetlands for the Future Fund	- Meeting of the Coordination Committee at COP14 - Presentation of the guide on good restoration practices	Rotation of coordination
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin, 2009	5	Yes	The Coordination Committee (member countries) as the governance body reviews progress annually.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	None	None		- Meeting of the Coordination Committee at COP14	Recurring institutional changes

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Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet), 2009	14	Yes	The Regional Initiative Committee is coordinated by two member countries and includes all Contracting Party members of the Initiative, the Convention Secretariat, and the Caribbean sub-regional representatives at the Standing Committee (past, present, and future).	Regional Initiative Committee member providing support	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	No information	361,000	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany (IKI)	- Launch of the IKI project in the Dominican Republic - Workshop on Climate Change and Ecosystem Services in the Dominican Republic - Side event at COP14	Overcoming delays due to COVID19
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs, 2009	14	Yes	The coordination committee of the Initiative is led by two member countries and includes all Contracting Parties with Secretariat's support.	Provides support to the regional committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	No information	48,769	Wetlands for the Future Fund, in-kind	- Meetings of the Coordination Committee - Update of the regional projects - Implementation of the regional project on "Status of coastal blue carbon ecosystem and capacity-building of the countries that make up the RRI"	Communication among countries, Resource Mobilization, rotation of coordination

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East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, 2006	18	No (structural info. is on its website)	The EAAFP Management Committee provides general policy, operational and financial direction to the EAAFP Secretariat. A meeting of the Partnership is held annually to oversee the implementation of the Partnership.	Partner	The EAAFP Finance Sub-Committee provides advises the Secretariat and Partners on overall financial management. Reporting to the Meeting of Partners (MOP).	653,479 (USD)	231,977 (USD)	Incheon Metropolitan City government, EAAFP Partner voluntary contributions, fundraising, project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and develop Flyway Network Sites including small grant programmes and technical advice on local sites - CEPA activities including Youth Think Tank and multiple webinars - Research, monitoring, knowledge including waterbird survey - Capacity building for local rangers - Flyway-wide approaches including support for ADB Regional Flyway Initiative 	No mention

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Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet), 1991	27	Yes	The Initiative includes the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com); the MedWet Steering Group (MedWet/SG); the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network; the MedWet Secretariat. The MedWet/Com is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the initiatives, including approval of strategic documents, annual budget and audited financial reports.	Permanent observer of the MedWet/Steering Group	The MedWet Secretariat administrates the approved budgets and submits the annual financial report to the MedWet/SG and to the MedWet/Com for approval.	646,275 (EUR)	606,000 (EUR)	Partner countries of MedWet, MAVA Foundation, European Union, French Biodiversity Agency and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for drafting of Resolution XIV.17 - Launched the Coalition of European Ramsar Regional Initiatives - Growth and consolidation of the Mediterranean Ramsar Site Managers Network which went from 6 to 46 managers - Strong impact of the MedWet Academy including 2 technical workshops and 5 online training courses for a total of 360 direct beneficiaries - Great success of the coordination of the WWD in the Mediterranean with the direct involvement of 562 organizations which organized 1121 events and reached more than 85,000 people 	Increased coordination with other RRIs and international NGOs

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Carpathian Wetland Ramsar Regional Initiative (CWI), 2004	7	Yes	The implementation body of CWI is a Board, which is composed of the focal points of each member. The Board elects a chair to guide the proceedings and meet periodically.	Provide inputs to the Board	Provided by the Board and the coordinating institution of the host country.	49,558 (EUR)	20,161	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment - Czechia, Ministry of Environment - Slovakia Ministry of Agriculture - Hungary, Centre for Ecological Research, UNE SCC, Eurosite, Succow Stiftung - Germany, Wetlands Int'l, Convention funding carryover from previous years	- Continued activities from previous years - Enforced networking, cooperation with relevant regional networks, partners, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, voluntary contributions from some ministries of the Carpathian countries to the CWI budget - Project proposals consulted and submitted - Establishment of the European Coalition of Ramsar Regional Initiatives with support of CWI	Capacities of coordination of RRI, governance and legal entity of RRI, war in Ukraine
Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiatives (NorBalWet), 2005	10	Yes	The Coordination Group composed of the National Focal Points of each participating country is the decision-making body.	Permanent observer of the Coordination Group	Host Country provides administrative support.	1,190	1,181	Ministry of Environment (Finland)	- Discussions on revitalizing the RRI were initiated - Website maintained until 31 December 2022	Challenging to hold regular meetings

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Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet), 2007	7	Yes	The implementing bodies are the Management Body and the National Working Groups. The responsibilities of the Management Body include taking strategic decisions and approving and monitoring annual work plans.	Member of Management Body	Provided by the Government of Ukraine (No detailed information)	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet), 2016	4	Yes (by-laws and internal regulations)	The governance bodies are: the Commission, the Governing Board, and the Secretariat of the Initiative. The Commission's responsibilities include making decision on directions of the Initiative, approving strategies, programme and work plan, and controlling financial resources.	No detailed information	Yes (by-laws and internal regulations).	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted

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Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin, 2016	7	Yes	The Initiative is coordinated by the Coordination Committee, of which the members are the National Focal Points.	The Convention Secretariat supports the governance body	Managed by the Convention Secretariat under decisions of the coordinator of the Initiative.	111,000	87,529	Convention's core budget (Balance carried over from previous year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of RRI countries at COP14 - Consultancy "Capacity building in wetland restoration, rehabilitation and monitoring strategies" - Translation of capacity-building consultancy products and 3 virtual training modules - Prioritization matrix exercise 	Delay/virtual meeting due to COVID19
Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA), 2016	5	No	The decision-making body is the Coordination Committee, which is composed of three key members and six alternatives members from member countries.	Observer	Technical Secretary of the RRI-CA (based at CAREC).	49,752	48,047	GIZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RRI-CA coordination meeting and inception workshop - Assessment of common problems in Ramsar Sites in Central Asia - Nomination of 4 sites in Uzbekistan for Ramsar Sites - Updating of RRI-CA websites 	Need for more face-to-face meetings

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Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), 2016	5	Yes	The Steering Committee, which is composed of the Administrative Authorities of member countries, provides oversight of the Initiative's operation.	Observer	Managed by IUCN Asia Regional Office.	196,408	228,212	Korea Environmental Industry & Technology Institute, BMU-IKI, EAAFP, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of GCF concept note - Develop comprehensive management plans for two sites - Small grant workshop on EbA best practices - Training on landscape-scale assessments - IBRRI Wetlands Outlook publication and support for WWD, CEPA activities 	Travel restrictions in the Indo-Burma Region until July 2022
Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI), 2022	10	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	None	None	N/A	N/A	N/A

Annex 2

Review of documentation submitted by the proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiative

A. The aim of Ramsar's Regional Initiatives

1. RRIs as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan and to raise the visibility of the Convention in the region.
 - **The International Mangrove Centre (IMC)** supports the implementation of Resolutions VII.9, XIV.6 and XIV.7 on international cooperation under the Convention, as well as Resolution VIII.32, XIII.14 and XIV.19 on mangroves and coastal blue ecosystems in the pantropical region. It implements the fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024 in Resolutions XII.2, XIII.5 and XIV.4. The operation of IMC will provide evidence-based conservation practice to inform the development of the fifth Strategic Plan.
2. How the RRI aligns its activities and operational targets with the objectives of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
 - The **strategic objective of IMC** is to promote international collaboration and joint actions on mangrove conservation, restoration and sustainable management under the framework of the Convention on Wetlands.
 - There are **6 specific targets** of IMC as shown below.
 - a) Promote knowledge sharing on mangroves;
 - b) Enhance technical exchanges and joint research on mangrove conservation and restoration;
 - c) Develop mangrove natural education system and public service;
 - d) Improve capacity building on mangrove conservation, restoration and wise use;
 - e) Conduct projects on priorities in mangrove conservation and restoration;
 - f) Explore the establishment of a blue carbon accounting system.
 - IMC is aligned with targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
3. The geographical region and a list of the countries that will actively participate.
 - Geographical region is **pantropical region**.
 - Participating Contracting Parties (19), co-sponsors(3): China, Cambodia, Madagascar.
 - *Members (tentative): (Asia, 4) Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, Thailand; (Africa, 7) Cameroon, Comoros, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania; (Latin America and the Caribbean, 5) Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela.*
4. List of Ramsar Administrative Authorities and all other participating stakeholders, such as Ministries other than those responsible for the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands, intergovernmental bodies, Convention on Wetlands International Organization Partners (IOPs), local communities, NGOs, economic actors, etc. that the RRIs will be engaging.

- **IMC** proposes to work with Governments of the member Contracting Parties listed in question 3, represented by the Administrative Authorities of the Convention; Intergovernmental bodies: UNEP, UNESCO, FAO, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; IOPs: IUCN, WWF, Wetland International, WWT, Birdlife International, and IWMI; and NGOs: Conservation International, Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF), The Nature Conservancy; other RRI: RAMCEA, RRC-EA, WACoWet, RRI for the Conservation and Wise-Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs, CariWet, and EAAFP; and private sector stakeholders: Hauwei, Tencent, etc.

Coordination Mechanisms

5. RRI's plan to assure coordination between the Parties and other members of the RRI. Coordinating functions assigned to Parties or participating institutions on a rotating basis, and modalities to be reflected in a regional agreement.
 - IMC will have a Secretariat, hosted jointly by the National Forest and Grassland Administration of China (NFGA) and the Shenzhen Municipal Government.
 - The Secretariat will be managed by the Secretary-General and international staff.
 - The Secretariat will be overseen by the IMC Council and intersessionally by the Management Board (see the TORs for the role of the IMC Council and the Management Board).

6. RRI's plans to develop an own identity, a specific logo (to be used in combination with the Ramsar logo) to avoid any confusion between its role and those of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and the Secretariat and to establish and regularly update a website for the RRI.
 - **IMC** has an independent staff recruitment process, finance management and workplan; a third-party auditor; and legal status as an independent international organization registered in China.

7. RRI's plans to coordinate regional projects or programmes which are ongoing or developed under the Initiative, and note if professional staff will be involved in their implementation or supervision.
 - **Initial projects concept:**
 - a) One year joint research by member parties and multiple stakeholders on 1) global need and priorities in international cooperation on mangrove conservation and restoration; 2) trends and gaps in global mangrove and blue carbon ecosystem conservation and restoration; 3) innovations and best practices in mangrove conservation, restoration and wise use. The result will be shared with STRP for technical input.
 - b) Annual workshop on mangrove conservation, restoration and international cooperation, with 100-200 participants. The first one is to be held in May 2023.
 - c) Annual training seminar for capacity building on mangrove conservation, restoration, sustainable management and wise use. The first one is to be organized in October 2023. Four seminars will be held annually from 2024.

B. Governance

8. RRI's plan to establish in the region existing or planned mechanisms to provide governance, coordination and advice (committees, boards, etc.), and how all relevant Contracting Parties and other stakeholders will be able to provide guidance and insight.
 - The governance structure is composed of 5 bodies.
 1. Council, decision making body, consists of party members in biennial rotation;
 2. Management Board, providing governance intersessionally;
 3. Scientific and Technical Committee, advisory body;
 4. Resource Mobilizing Committee, fund raising and resource mobilizing body;
 5. The Secretariat, coordination body.
 - Contracting Parties and stakeholders provide guidance and insights as either rotating members or observers through annual working meetings and intersessional communication with the Council and Management Board, and meetings of Scientific and Technical Committee and Resource Mobilizing Committee.
9. RRI's have or plan to have terms of reference, rules of procedure, structure, and membership, and/or other written regulations which the Initiative has established or is planning.
 - A draft TOR has been developed. Proposal notes that the MedWet TOR was taken as reference (Attachment 1).

C. Substantive Elements

10. RRI's approach to create an enabling environment in the region, provide a framework for the development of collaborative networks, and seek collaboration with other intergovernmental or regional and international agencies, local NGOs, and partners, including Ramsar IOPs operating in the region.
 - **IMC** will engage Parties and stakeholders through participating governance and effective coordination. Objectives and activities of the Initiative will be designed with shared interests under the framework of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan. Annual work meetings of governance bodies, international workshops and training seminars will provide stable networks for members and stakeholders.
11. RRI's plan to make optimal use of the Ramsar tools and to consider strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions to become partners in the Initiative.
 - **IMC** will develop its Strategic Plan and Work Plan combining Resolutions and the Strategic Plan of the Convention with other global agendas in biodiversity, climate, land and sustainable development. Handbooks, Technical Reports and Briefing Notes of the STRP will be the guidance for knowledge sharing, technical exchange, joint research and training activities. Also, there will be feedback and inputs to the tools based on practice and improvement.
12. RRI's plans to raise the visibility of the Convention and awareness of Convention objectives, with specific activities to increase the visibility of the Convention and the general understanding of its objectives.

- **IMC** will increase the visibility of wetlands and the Convention on Wetlands through development of an education system and international network. Activities for mangrove conservation and restoration will promote cooperation among Parties and non-Party countries, as well as intergovernmental organizations and MEAs.

D. Financial and Other Support

13. RRI's plan on expenditure and financial requirements for the period 2022-2024 and financial support providers. Including amounts that have been firmly pledged and the needs not yet covered. Also, describe planned expenditures and the sources and payments of secured income for the year 2022.

- Total planned expenditure will be 3 million CHF for the period 2023-2025 (1.5 million CHF for the Secretariat operation will be funded by the Shenzhen Municipal Government, 1.5 million CHF for activities will be funded by the International Mangrove Foundation of China).
- 1.5 million CHF is expected to be used for the operation of the Secretariat and another 1.5 million CHF is to be used for annual work meeting, annual international workshop, and 2-4 training seminars per year.

14. Requesting for start-up funding from the core funding. If yes, a plan on how the Initiative will generate its resources and become financially self-sufficient after the start-up phase and in the long term.

- No core budget from the Convention is requested for the Initiative. There is a request for Secretariat staff support in coordination with the IMC Secretariat. Travels from the Convention Secretariat to IMC will be provided through the budget of IMC.

15. Plan on how the RI will implement financial management to ensure transparency and accountability.

- The budget, income and expenditure are approved by the Council and Management Board through open meetings. There will be a third party auditor of the finance of the Secretariat and it will open to the public and the Convention Secretariat through annual report.

16. Bodies that have expressed political support in addition to those which have submitted a National Letter of Support.

- Not Available.

17. List of the letters of support (Form B submission) by national Ramsar Administrative Authorities and other partners.

- Cambodia;
- China; and
- Madagascar.

Attachment 1: Draft terms of reference of the International Mangrove Centre (IMC)

I. Purposes

1. Under the framework of the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), these Terms of Reference, made public and shared with the Ramsar Secretariat, set out the initiative and functioning of the International Mangrove Centre (hereafter referred to as IMC), which was established to support countries with mangrove distribution in the pantropic region (hereafter referred to as Region) in their implementation of the conservation, restoration, sustainable management and wise use of mangrove wetlands, therefore, to contribute achieving 2030 Global Biodiversity Framework, global climate goals and UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
2. IMC is a long-term collaborative effort between pantropic and other interested countries and entities, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, intergovernmental institutions, international non-governmental organizations and national institutions specialized in mangrove issues, which aims to ensure the effective conservation and restoration of mangroves and the wise use of their resources, values and services under the framework of the Ramsar Convention.
3. IMC is an endogenous mechanism based on mutual trust and respect.
4. IMC shall foster synergies with the relevant institutions dealing with the conservation and wise use of mangroves in the pantropic region, including but not limited in other Ramsar Regional Initiatives and international initiatives.

II. Scope and Objectives of IMC

5. IMC is a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) intended to provide operational means for international cooperation and support for an effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan in the pantropic region, for improving the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and mangrove wetland-related issues of common concern through voluntary international cooperation at regional level and, in particular involving all mangrove relevant national and regional stakeholders.
6. IMC objectives are:
 - a) Promote knowledge sharing on mangroves;
 - b) Enhance technical exchanges and joint research on mangrove conservation and restoration;
 - c) Develop of mangrove natural education system and public service;
 - d) Improve capacity building on mangrove conservation, restoration and wise use;
 - e) Conduct projects on priorities in mangrove conservation and restoration;
 - f) Explore to establish a blue carbon accounting system.

III. Membership of IMC

7. Members

The IMC membership includes:

- Mangrove Country-members: states with mangroves in their territory as the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in the pantropic region. They have the right to vote.
- Non Mangrove Country-members: states without mangroves as the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. They have the right to vote.
- Non-country members: national non-governmental organisations; international non-governmental organisations; other non-governmental organisations; universities and research institutes, local communities and the private sector. They are observers.

Members with the right to vote, contribute to IMC by active involvement of activities, resources mobilizing and paying negotiated membership dues and active involvement.

The membership of the IMC is listed in Annex A.

8. Admission

Countries shall become members of IMC by notifying the IMC Council of their adhesion to the IMC Statutes and these Terms of Reference, effective upon participation of the first year's activity and payment of the first year's negotiated membership dues.

Non-countries shall become members of IMC when the Council has determined that the applicant:

- a) shares the objectives of IMC;
- b) is active in the conservation of nature and natural resources, including their scientific, educational, legal, economic, social and political dimensions, at global, regional, national and local levels;
- c) is committed to participate actively in the IMC activities of the annually adopted work plan;
- d) does not pursue objectives or carry out activities that conflict with the objectives or activities of IMC; and
- e) signs a formal letter of support to the Ramsar Secretariat, using the format adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives.

Membership will be effective upon participation to planned activities/payment of the first year's negotiated membership dues.

The maximum number of non-country members eligible is set at a maximum of one- third of the country members.

Before admitting an applicant, the Council shall notify members of the application and consider any objection rose. The Council shall admit the applicant by a two-thirds majority of votes cast.

Members shall:

- a) support and facilitate the objectives, activities and governance of IMC;
- b) provide to IMC, upon request, readily available information regarding their activities in support of IMC's objectives;
- c) avoid pursuing objectives or carry out activities that conflict with the objectives or activities of IMC;
- d) disclose any potential conflict of interest on matters under consideration by the Council and refrain from participating in the discussion and voting on these matters;
- e) pay negotiated membership dues as prescribed in the para. X.

9. Suspension, Rescission and Withdrawal

The rights of a member in connection with elections and voting shall ipso facto be suspended when no appearance in IMC activities or the negotiated dues of that member are two years in arrears. If a Member intends to reobtain the right to vote, it has to regularize the arrears of contributions due to IMC.

If absence in IMC activities are more than two years, or the negotiated dues of a Member are more than two years in arrears, the matter shall be referred to the Meeting of the Council, which may rescind all the remaining rights of the Member concerned. Such rescission shall be on such terms as the Meeting of the Council may determine.

Should a Member act in a manner seriously inconsistent with the requirements of article 9, the Council may suspend that Member by a two-thirds majority of votes cast. While under suspension, a member shall not be entitled to exercise any membership rights except the right of withdrawal. To reinstate membership of the Council after being suspended, the Admission procedure as stated in para. 8 has to be completed.

Any Member may withdraw at any time from membership of Council by giving notice in writing to the Chair to that effect. The Member withdrawing shall not be entitled to any refund of membership dues paid.

IV. Governance and functioning

10. The IMC structure is composed of five bodies:

- a) Council, decision making body, consists of party members in biennial rotation;
- b) Management Board, provide governance intersessionally;
- c) Scientific and Technical Committee, advisory body;
- d) Resource Mobilizing Committee, fund raising and resource mobilizing body;
- e) The Secretariat, coordination body.

11. IMC shall establish regular contacts and cooperation with the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Convention's programme on Communication, Capacity building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) National Focal Points of the IMC country members, as well as with other appropriate experts, in order to obtain the best scientific and technical advice, and to contribute with IMC regional experience and knowledge into STRP's and CEPA's work at the global level.

V. The IMC Council

12. The Council is the governing and decision-making body for the IMC Initiative. The Council includes representatives of all the members of the IMC Initiative. It meets, regularly, at least once a year, guides and monitors the Initiative's work programme and its resources consistently with the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

13. In addition to members, non-governmental organizations and individuals may also be invited to participate in Council meetings as observers, without the right to vote, and participate in the

adoption of decisions and in the presentation of information or reports relevant to the objectives of the meeting. Ramsar Secretariat is permanent observers in IMC.

14. The Council has been entrusted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention to assist in the effective implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plans and Resolutions relevant to the Pantropic region.
15. The responsibilities of the Council in overseeing the implementation of the IMC Initiative are:
 - a) to adopt the IMC strategic documents, including the three-year strategic work plan and related provisional budget, and work plans;
 - b) to monitor the implementation and results of IMC activities;
 - c) to consider the reports and recommendations from Management Board;
 - d) to comment on the proposed new programmes and activities by the Ramsar Convention, by invitation of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat;
 - e) to approve the selection and replacement of the Secretary General;
 - f) to approve the establishment of temporary ad hoc working groups and their dissolution;
 - g) to designate the members of Management Board;
 - h) to admit new members of IMC;
 - i) to take any other decisions for the good and effective functioning of the Initiative; and
 - j) to provide guidance to the IMC bodies, promote IMC and its work, as well as the co-funding of its activities by its members and any additional donor.
16. The members of Council shall make every effort to reach agreement on all matters of substance by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, the report shall reflect the views of all members of Council. If all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, any decision shall, as a last resort, be taken by a simple majority vote of the members, present and voting.

VI. The IMC Management Board

17. Management Board is the governance body that operates intersessionally between Council meetings with the responsibility to supervise the implementation of the decisions of the Council and the effective functioning of the IMC Secretariat.
18. Management Board is composed of:
 - a) six country representatives, one from each of the following Ramsar regions: Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Oceania;
 - b) a permanent representative of the country hosting the IMC Secretariat;
 - c) a representative of the non-country members;
 - d) a representative of the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, as a permanent observer (*ex officio*);
 - e) a representative of UNEP, as a permanent observer (*ex officio*);
 - f) a representative of FAO, as a permanent observer (*ex officio*);
 - g) the IMC Secretary General (*ex officio*).
19. In the case of the six countries, an alternate country from each region is designated by the Council to serve in the event that the regular country representative of the six regions should be unable to attend a meeting.

20. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Management Board are designated, on a rotating basis, by the Council at the time of election of Management Board members among the representatives of the six countries. They shall serve the Council in the intersessional period until the closure of the next Council meeting and therefore serve in those capacities until their successors take office. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Management Board shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms.
21. Countries to serve on Management Board should be proposed by their regional group of Council members.
22. Management Board meets periodically, at least two times a year, face-to-face but shall operate largely through email and online processes. The necessary budget provisions to cover travel and subsistence costs of the members of the Steering Group eligible for such support are included in the IMC Secretariat budget.
23. The responsibilities of Management Board are:
 - a) to take operational decisions between Council meetings based on the decisions of the Council;
 - b) to approve the three-year strategic work plan and related provisional budget, prepared by the Secretariat, to be submitted for adoption by the Council;
 - c) to approve the annual work plans and annual budgets prepared by the Secretariat;
 - d) to approve the annual contributions of IMC members to the IMC budget;
 - e) to approve the annual reports and audited accounts prepared by the IMC Secretariat;
 - f) to guide and supervise arrangements for the meetings of Council;
 - g) to select and appoint the Secretary General to be submitted for approval by the Council or provide arguments for his/her replacement to the Council;
 - h) to evaluate, on an annual basis, the performance of the Secretary General and report to the Council;
 - i) to propose to the Council the renewal of the Secretary General contract or his/her replacement;
 - j) to approve the recruitment of Secretariat staff members in consultation with the Secretary General.

VII. The IMC Secretariat

24. IMC is coordinated by the IMC Secretariat, which carries out the operational management and the administrative functions, with the support of the Ramsar Secretariat, as appropriate.
25. The IMC Secretariat operates under the authority and supervision of the Council and, intersessionally, of Management Board.
26. The IMC Secretariat is managed by the Secretary General, who is selected via a competitive procedure. The Secretary General is appointed through a public call with a selection procedure approved by the Council. The Secretary General has a term of office of three years. At the end of each mandate the Secretary General's terms of offices can be renewed after a prior and positive evaluation carried out by Management Board and approved by the Council.

27. The core IMC Secretariat consists of the Secretary General, an Administrative Officer, a Financial Officer, a Science Officer, a Communication Officer, a Training Officer, and a Programme Officer. Other Secretariat staff members may be recruited according to the needs of the work plan and available resources.
28. The IMC Secretariat employs the Secretary General and other staff members of the IMC Secretariat according to the laws of the host country.
29. Under the leadership of the Secretary General, the responsibilities of the IMC Secretariat are:
 - a) to facilitate and promote collaboration among IMC members;
 - b) to coordinate the implementation of the work plans adopted by the Council;
 - c) to prepare annual work plans and budgets for the approval of Management Board and adoption by the Council;
 - d) to act as the secretariat for the Council and Management Board;
 - e) to identify and actively promote the involvement of pantropic stakeholders in the implementation of the IMC work plans;
 - f) to administer the budgets adopted by the Council and to prepare the annual financial reports to be submitted to Management Board and to the Council; and
 - g) to report periodically to Management Board the progress of the initiatives of the IMC bodies and relevant outcomes.
 - h) to report to the Council meeting the progress of the initiatives of the IMC bodies and relevant outcomes
 - i) to represent the IMC initiative in the international fora
30. The IMC Secretariat may have a formal recognition by signing a hosting agreement with the host country, and with the host institution to recognize the specific status of the Initiative and its operational independence with regard to the host institution.

VIII. The IMC Scientific and Technical Committee (STC)

31. The Terms of Reference for the STC are to be developed by the committee.

IX. The IMC Resource Mobilizing Committee (RMC)

32. The Terms of Reference for the RMC are to be developed by the committee.

X. Financing

33. The income of IMC shall be derived from contribution of host country and negotiated membership dues, contracts, grants, donations, investments and from other sources approved by the Council.
34. The Council adopts a baseline annual budget to cover the costs of the core staff and operations of the IMC Secretariat.
35. In order to allow IMC to provide lasting structural and operational support to facilitate and improve the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the pantropic region, all IMC members should provide sufficient and adequate contributions to the baseline annual budget

to support a minimal operational structure for effective work in the region and take the necessary steps to achieve and ensure financial sustainability of IMC.

36. If agreed after negotiation, dues for country members shall be established by the Council according to the UN Scale of Assessment adopted by Ramsar and adjusted to the context of IMC. The Council may establish a minimum contribution and groups for the setting of dues. Dues for non-country members shall be established by the Council on the proposal of Management Board. Negotiated membership dues shall become payable on the first day of each calendar year.
37. IMC's specific programmes and activities are supported by an International Mangrove Fund hosted by China through application and selection.
38. Council members are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to the IMC budget beyond the baseline annual budget, for IMC's specific programmes and activities.
39. IMC may receive donations and/or voluntary contributions from governmental, non-governmental and private sector.
40. The IMC Secretariat takes all the necessary measures to establish financial sustainability with resources from a variety of fairly distributed reliable sources, allowing for the development of its activities over the long term.

XI. Reporting

41. IMC Secretariat reports annually to the Ramsar Secretariat on work progress, collaborations it has established, current financial status, including financial and work plans for the following year, using the format adopted by the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee.

A summary of Ramsar Convention and other funding sources is reported. Annual reports shall be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat in time for the preparation of the documents for the annual meeting of to the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee.

XII. Use of the IMC name and logo

42. The name and logo of IMC are protected. They should be used by any Council member in conjunction with the Ramsar Convention logo for activities implemented within the framework of IMC Initiative.
43. Any other organization or individual wishing to use the logo should obtain approval from the Secretary General.