

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 for 2024 in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 *on Ramsar Regional Initiatives*; and
- ii. note the allocation of funds from the 2025 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” proposed in document SC65 Doc.8.1, to provide start-up funding to a newly established Initiative for its activities in 2025, as follows:
 - CHF 30,000 each for the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI) and Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative.

Background

1. The Conference of the Contracting Parties at its 14th meeting (COP14, 2022), in paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.7 Part A on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, recalled that Ramsar Regional Initiatives (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. Based on Resolution XIV.7 Part B and Decision SC62-22 and Decision SC63-19 of the Standing Committee, the following 22 RRIs are 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

Eighteen 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
- 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)
- International Mangrove Centre (IMC)
- The Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI)
- Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative

Progress by the 22 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2024

3. Under the *Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention* in Annex 1 of Resolution XIV.7 Part A, 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 form in Annex 3 of the same Resolution. The Conference of the Contracting Parties also instructs the Secretariat in paragraph 14 of the same Resolution 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 to the Secretariat the report of progress of work in 2024 and planned work for 2025, including a financial overview, by 17 January 2024. Since the 64th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC64) was held early in 2025, the Secretariat’s report on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives could not be prepared in time and is therefore being submitted to SC65.
5. Annual reports were received from 15 RRIs.¹ The Secretariat sent reminders to the RRI coordinators, requesting them to submit annual reports, and followed up bilaterally. The following RRIs did not submit annual reports within the required deadlines:
 - Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands;
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs;
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin;
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet); and
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet).
6. The failure of some RRIs to submit annual reports continues to become more widespread in 2025. Table 1 below indicates RRIs that have not submitted a report in at least one of the last five years.

¹ The reports are available at: https://www.ramsar.org/search?f%5B0%5D=bodies_and_events%3A2723&f%5B1%5D=search_date%3A2025.

Table 1: Ramsar Regional Initiatives that have not submitted a report, 2020-2021 to 2024-2025

Reporting period	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
BlackSeaWet			X		
CariWet				X	X
CREHO		X			
High Andean Wetlands RRI	X	X		X	X
La Plata RRI					X
Mangroves and Coral Reefs RRI				X	X
NigerWet					X
SenegalWet		X	X	X	X
WACoWet		X	X		X

7. SenegalWet has failed to submit a report for four continuous years, and has not done so since the reporting period of 2021-2022, after it received the first tranche of funding from the Convention allocated from the core budget in 2021. For this reason, the Secretariat has not disbursed the final tranche of funding.
8. RRIs are encouraged to submit their annual reports in the next reporting cycle in line with subparagraph 12.e) of Resolution XIV.7 Part A.
9. The Secretariat reviewed the annual reports submitted by 15 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:
 - 13 RRIs have held at least one coordination meeting during the year.
 - RRIs organized or supported communication, capacity-building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) activities in the region, including World Wetlands Day celebrations.
 - A few RRIs conducted regional policy studies or assessments on thematic areas, including climate change, invasive species, and management of Wetlands of International Importance.
 - Many RRIs have engaged in fundraising activities such as writing funding proposals or establishing sustainable financing platforms.
11. The total annual expenditure of RRIs in 2024 was an estimated CHF 3.9 million. This was an increase from CHF 3.4 million in 2023 and CHF 2.7 million in 2022.²
12. Commonly recognized challenges identified from the reports were limited financial resources and lack of coordination among member countries.
13. The Secretariat has been promoting more opportunities for RRIs to communicate and learn from each other. It organized the third virtual annual planning meeting of RRIs on 25 March 2025, providing an opportunity for RRIs to share their annual plans and identify possible areas of cooperation. Furthermore, RRIs discussed how they can collaborate together during COP15 including a common exhibition booth and a side event co-organized by all RRIs.

² 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).

Allocation of Convention core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2025

14. In paragraph 17 of Resolution XIV.7 Part A, the Conference of the Contracting 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, the 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”.
15. For 2025, SARRI and Danube WILDisland RRI are eligible for support. Through the annual report, SARRI has requested CHF 30,000 and Danube WILDisland RRI has requested CHF 30,000 from the Convention core budget to support its activities in 2025. Requests for Convention core budget support are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Requests for Convention core budget support (in CHF)

Ramsar Regional Initiative	2024 expenditure (CHF)		Forecast / budgeted expenditure for activities in 2025	2025 funding (CHF)	
	Approved allocation for 2024	Reported expenditure in 2024		Requested 2025 contribution	Secretariat’s proposed budget 2025 allocation
SARRI	0	101,244	50,400	30,000	30,000
Danube WILDisland RRI	29,000	45,407	133,000	30,000	30,000

Annex 1
Summary of the annual reports of RRIs for 2024-2025

Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) and year of establishment	Principles from Resolution XIV.7					Planned budget for 2024 (CHF unless stated)	Expenditure in 2024 (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	6	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.	84,380	54,090	Gov't of Uganda, other donors	- Twinning of selected Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar Sites") in Uganda - Implementation of the RAMCEA CEPA plan - Meeting of RAMCEA Regional Governing Council - Regional training on wetland inventory, mapping and assessment - Rapid assessment of current status of Lake Opeta Ramsar site	Frequently changing national focal points, lack of collective resource mobilization strategy
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	363,381 (USD)	326,901 (USD)	Ministry of Environment, Panama, USFWS-NMBCA, Suma Group, Education First (STEAM Programme), CReW+, other income	- Integrated approach ecological and sustainable wastewater management at Niga Kantule Port in the Guna Yala - STEAM field visit programme - Ensuring water security in Santa Maria River - Hydrology restoration for migratory birds in Parita Bay.	Getting Board of Directors involved, updating the strategy for financial stability of the organization, search for regional opportunities in collaboration with the countries

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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.	97,000 (USD)	51,000 (USD)	Department of Environment (I.R. Iran), Ramsar Municipality	- MOU with municipality, University, etc. - CEPA activities: online webinars, exhibition, WWD celebration, photo award, etc. - Training on invasive species, educational meeting	Budget shortage hindered implementation of activities, lack of national legal identity
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	878,242	727,266	Government of the Republic of Korea	- Training of wetland managers (regional, sub-regional, national), development of Eco-DRR guidance - Organization of WLI-Asia Oceania Conference, Wetland City Network, Asia Wetland School Network - RRC-EA Wetland Fund - WWD activities in the Republic of Korea - CEPA activities (website, web magazine, documentary production)	Not stated
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 report	No report	No report	No report	No report

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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.	No report	No report	No report	No report	No report
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands, 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).	No report	No report	No report	No report	No report
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).	No report	No report	No report	No report	No report

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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 report	No report	No report	No report	No report
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 report	No report	No report	No report	No report

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East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, 2006	18	Yes	The EAAFP Management Committee provides general policy, operational and financial direction to the EAAFP Secretariat. A meeting of the Partnership is held biennially to oversee the implementation of the Partnership.	Partner	The EAAFP Finance Sub-Committee advises the Secretariat and Partners on overall financial management. Reporting to the Meeting of Partners (MOP).	305,000 (USD)	237,584 (USD)	Incheon Metropolitan City government, EAAFP partner voluntary contributions	<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 Task Force establishment, partner with World Migratory Bird Day and multiple webinars - Research, monitoring, knowledge including waterbird survey - Capacity building for site managers - Flyway-wide approaches including support for ASEAN Flyway Network, Regional Flyway Initiative, NEASPEC, Flyway University Alliance, sister site partnerships 	Stability of funding, stagnation in terms of financial income, balancing requests from partners with available resources

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Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet), 1991	27	Yes	Governance structure includes Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com); the MedWet Steering Group (MedWet/SG); the MedWet Secretariat (hosted at Tour du Valat, France); the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory; the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network. MedWet/Com oversees the implementation of the Initiative, approves 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 MedWet/SG and to MedWet/Com for approval.	350,800 (EUR)	259,000 (EUR)	Partner countries of MedWet, OFB, European Union, FFEM/MAVA and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of the policy and advocacy role - Consolidation of the Mediterranean Ramsar Site Managers Network and related MedWet Academy - Coordination of the CEPA programme including WWD and the Wetland Cities Programme in the Mediterranean - Delivery of several EU funded projects - Preparation of the Mediterranean Wetland Outlook III and its Geoportal 	Getting responses from partners across the region; lack of a coordinator for most of 2024

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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	41,700 (EUR)	15,982 (EUR)	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment - Czechia, Ministry of Environment - Slovakia Ministry of Agriculture - Hungary, UNE SCC, DANUBEPARKS Association, Wetlands Int'l, Danube-Carpathian Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - CWI and wetland issues integrated in the Carpathian Convention documents and plans - Project proposals consulted and submitted - Development of the European Coalition of Ramsar Regional Initiatives with support of CWI - International training course and study tour on wetland restoration organized in cooperation with the Czech government and the Ramsar Committee 	Coordination capacity for RRI, governance and legal entity of RRI will continue to be discussed
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	0	0	0	- All activities postponed	Capacity to initiate new or follow-up on planned activities have been limited or absent

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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)	0	0	0	- All activities postponed	Communication between member countries not at a sufficient level
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 report	No report	No report	No report	No report
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	4,600	4,600	Convention's core budget (Balance carried over from previous year)	- 2 virtual meetings of RRI countries - Implementation of consultancy on the definition of the methodology to unify and standardize priority activities in the action plan	Difficulty in organizing a face-to-face meeting

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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)	55,000	5,000	CAREC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nomination of sites in Central Asia for Ramsar Sites - Development of a National Strategy for the Protection of Wetlands (UZB) - Updating of RRI-CA websites - Identification of potential donors - Two capacity building conferences 	Lack of sufficient expertise, funding and coordination
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	371,356	403,383	AFD, BRIDGE project (SDC), Adaptation Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submitting GCF funding proposal - Submitting GEF IW Proposal - IBRRI Steering Committee meeting and technical workshop - Launch of the IBRRI Strategic Plan 2025-2030 - Publication of IBRRI site designation strategy - Support for WWD, CEPA activities 	Political situation in Myanmar, limited national wetlands funding due to budget restrictions
Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI), 2022	12	Yes	Governing and decision making body is the SARRI Assembly, operational governing body is the Steering Group comprised of the 5 members and coordinating body is the IUCN ESARO as the Secretariat.	TBD	SARRI Secretariat (IUCN ESARO)	98,774	101,244	Convention core budget support, OFB, IUCN (in-kind)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointment of SARRI Secretariat and the appointment of Chair and Co-Chair - Development and adoption of TORs - Convening of regional workshops - Development of draft SARRI strategic plan, 3 draft bankable project proposals, visual identity of SARRI 	Lack of adequate financial resources

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International Mangrove Center (IMC)	18	Yes	IMC Council IMC Scientific and Technical Subgroup Technical Support Unit IMC Secretariat	Observer	IMC Secretariat	2,371,138	1,671,996	Government of China	- Signing ceremony for the establishment agreement of the IMC - Documentary video and CEPA activities - Joint research - Workshop on mangrove conservation and restoration	Preparation for establishing Secretariat still requires more time
Danube WILDIsland RRI	10	Yes	WILDIsland Steering Group Danube WILDIsland regional office at the DANUBEPARKS Association as the Coordination Unit Expert Working Group as an Advisory Body Formally hosted by ICPDR	Observer	Secretariat	39,000	44,065	Convention core budget support, LIFE WILDIsland, EURENI project	- Kick-off event - Development of long-term RRI strategic work plan - On-site meetings and study tour	Opening of office took much longer than expected