



Ramsar Pre-COP12 Meeting for Central Asia

MEETING REPORT

Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic

6 – 9 April, 2015

Host: the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

Organizers: the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

Sponsors: the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic, Royal Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea



Background:

The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) is the main decision making body of the Ramsar Convention. COPs are preceded by regional meetings during which Draft Resolutions are presented and discussed; regional priorities and positions are identified and agreed upon tentatively. Pre-COP meetings also serve as a platform for the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties to report on national and regional level implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the given region and to identify future priorities.

In preparation for the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention which will be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 1 to 9 June 2015, a meeting for the Parties from Central Asia was organized in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic from 6 - 9 April 2015.

This three-day meeting was hosted by the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. The participating countries were the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan – the five Central Asian countries that share challenges as well as opportunities in their work to ensure the conservation and wise use of wetlands. A number of partner organizations, namely, China Center for SCO Environmental Cooperation within China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center, the National Water Dialogue of the UNECE (Kyrgyzstan), the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia, and World Wildlife Foundation (Kazakhstan) were invited and presented their work in Central Asia (the full list of participants is available in Annex 2).

This pre-COP12 meeting for the Central Asian countries was unique in a way that it was the first Russian language pre-COP meeting to bring together the five Contracting Parties of Central Asia and to address the specific issues that they face in implementing the Ramsar Convention individually as well as regionally.

Besides geographic proximity, these five countries are tied by close culture and history. They all have been part of the Soviet Union and now share similar challenges of transitional economies. In this region, major rivers cross international borders, and water and energy are closely intertwined and can be a significant source of tension. Thus, organizing a pre-COP12 meeting for these five Contracting Parties was part of the Ramsar Secretariat's ongoing efforts to better understand and provide support to its Parties.

Aim of the meeting:

First, the meeting was aimed at serving as a platform for information sharing between the major stakeholders involved in wetland conservation and wise use in Central Asia (the Ramsar Secretariat, the five Ramsar Contracting Parties, and International Organizations) focusing on the issues such as main achievements, key challenges, and major opportunities available in the area of wetland conservation and wise use across Central Asia.

Secondly, the meeting sought to discuss and identify the key actions needed in enhancing the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia both at the national and regional levels.

Thirdly, the meeting presented a formal opportunity for the five Central Asian countries to prepare themselves for the COP12 that will take place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015.

Another aim of this meeting was to re-visit previous discussions held between the Contracting Parties of Central Asia about adopting regional approach for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the region. It should be noted that the agenda of this meeting deliberately avoided extensive discussions of water sharing challenges because of political sensitivity and potential deadlock involved in them. Instead, the meeting focused on the issues that encouraged the countries to work together and support each other. As the countries of Central Asia start to work together on the conservation and wise use of

wetlands in the region and form a good base of regional cooperation they may want to extend their area of work to the issues related to the transboundary water allocation.

Structure:

The meeting comprised three major parts: presentations, discussions and field visit. The first day and the first half of the second day were scheduled for presentations by the five Ramsar Contracting Parties, partner organizations and the Ramsar Secretariat. Once all the participants were equipped with adequate and up-to-date information on the status of wetland conservation and wise use at various levels, discussions began with an aim to identify the way forward and how to better implement the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia. The field visit, a trip to the Lake Issyk Kul - one of the three Ramsar Sites of Kyrgyzstan took place on the third and fourth days of the Meeting (the full programme of the meeting is available in Annex 1).

Working languages:

Russian and English with simultaneous interpretation.

Sponsorship:

This pre-COP12 meeting for the Central Asian countries was made possible with generous financial support from the Governments of the Kyrgyz Republic, Norway, and the Republic of Korea. The Ramsar Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the above-mentioned sponsors on behalf of all the participants.

MAIN SESSIONS

Update from the Ramsar Secretariat:

The Ramsar Secretariat briefed the Parties and partner organizations on the major events and decisions made globally as well as in Europe and Asia - the two regions more relevant to Central Asia – in the past triennium. Since pre-COP12 meetings are held in preparation for COP to allow an opportunity for discussion on the Draft Resolutions, the Ramsar Secretariat introduced the key Draft Resolutions that were of most relevance to the Central Asian Parties. These were the Draft Resolution XII.2 *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2015-2021*, Draft Resolution XII.5 *Proposed new framework for delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance on the Convention*, and Draft Resolution XII.15 *Evaluating and ensuring the effective management and conservation of Ramsar Sites*.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan kindly translated the Draft Resolution XII.2 *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2015-2021* into Russian and shared with the meeting participants. The document was then uploaded on the COP12 webpage (please see the link below) and is now accessible to those interested.

http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_dr02_strategic_plan_russian_gov_kyrgyz.pdf

Update from the Contracting Parties and discussions:

The five Contracting Parties of Central Asia made presentations outlining the main achievements and challenges of the past triennium and providing a brief overview of the major opportunities and priorities for the next triennium.

A snapshot of the status of Ramsar Sites in Central Asia (Table 1):

Central Asia is home to 21 Wetlands of International Importance, out of which almost half is distributed throughout Kazakhstan's territory. Since its accession to the Convention in 2007 Kazakhstan has

designated eight wetlands. The country has inherited two Ramsar Sites from the Soviet Union. Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) of these two Sites are long out of date. Tajikistan hosts five Ramsar Sites, all of which were designated in 2001 when the country acceded to the Convention. However, none of the Sites has a RIS. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are home to three, two and one Ramsar Site respectively. Data for Uzbekistan's two Sites is significantly outdated (for more details please see the Annex 4).

In total, more than half of the Ramsar Sites across Central Asia need to be updated.

According to the Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance, four Sites in Central Asia – two each in Kazakhstan and in Kyrgyzstan - were reported to have human-induced negative changes having occurred, occurring or likely to occur (Article 3.2). The Ramsar Secretariat has opened Article 3.2 files for all four Sites and is following up with the respective Administrative Authorities. There is no wetland in Central Asia that is listed on the Montreux Record currently.

Table 1: A snapshot of the status of Ramsar Sites in Central Asia (for more information please refer to the Annex 4).

Country	Year of entry into force	# of Ramsar Sites	Status of RIS	Status of map	# of Article 3.2 Ramsar Sites
Kazakhstan	2007	10	5 out of date (50%)	1 lacking, 4 out of date	2
Kyrgyzstan	2003	3	1 out of date (30%)	1 out of date	2
Tajikistan	2001	5	5 lacking (100%)	5 out of date	0
Turkmenistan	2009	1	Up to date	Up to date	0
Uzbekistan	2002	2	2 out of date (100%)	2 out of date	0
Total:		21	13 (60%)	13 (60 %)	4 (20 %)

Main achievements of the past triennium:

Designation of new Ramsar Sites:

Kazakhstan designated two new territories as Ramsar Sites in early 2012 (Lesser Aral Sea and Delta of the Syrdarya River, and Ili River Delta and South Lake Balkhash). The country plans to designate four new wetlands as Ramsar Sites in the next triennium.

Turkmenistan carried out a study of ecological character of the wetlands across its territory. The study served as a basis for classifying wetlands and developing a regionalization scheme for wetlands of Turkmenistan. The study has identified 11 wetlands that meet the Ramsar criteria either individually or as a cluster. It is planned that Ogurjaly Island in the south-east of Caspian Sea will be designated as a Ramsar Site in 2015 -2016.

Uzbekistan has identified 13 wetlands that meet the Ramsar criteria. Nomination of two large water reservoirs, namely Kuyumazar and Tudakul for the Ramsar List has been agreed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. Data collection and analysis are underway for these two nominations. Management plan for both reservoirs was developed.

Management of the existing Ramsar Sites:

During the last three years, two Ramsar Sites were added into the list of the Specially Protected Areas of Kazakhstan. In the result, eight of the ten Ramsar Sites in Kazakhstan now carry national legal designation and are managed under the law of the Specially Protected Areas of the Government of Kazakhstan. In general, national legal designation is positively correlated with improved protection and conservation of the areas. Also, three Specially Protected Areas that cover Ramsar Sites wholly or partly were added to the list of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

In 2013, the Government of Kazakhstan issued a list of the wetlands of international and national importance on its territory. The list comprised 54 wetlands including 10 Ramsar Sites and 44 wetlands of national importance. It was an effort to signify the fact that Kazakhstan's wetlands are important habitats for millions of waterfowl and semiaquatic birds and to ensure that these wetlands are conserved and wisely used at all times. It is expected that the issuance of this list will positively impact the conservation of all Ramsar Sites in Kazakhstan and will be of particular importance for the two Ramsar Sites that are not Specially Protected Areas – Koibagar Tyuntyugurskaya lakes system and Kulykol Taldykolskaya lakes system.

Tajikistan together with Afghanistan adopted a regional approach in addressing the existing and emerging issues in the basins of Pyandj and Amu-Darya rivers. In addition, a Tajik National Park (Mountains of the Pamir) including its adjacent wetlands was designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rehabilitation of riparian ecosystems of the Tigrovaya Balka Reserve took place and led to expansion of the site.

Uzbekistan prepared a proposal on the expansion of the protected network with 29 territories, out of which five territories cover wetlands. Aydar Arnasay lakes system is a good example of the wise use of Ramsar Sites as it hosts more than 150 fishery enterprises with total annual catch fluctuating between 4500 to 6500 tons. Unfortunately, a large number of illegal and unsustainable fishing practices are recorded at the site.

Legal framework on wetlands:

In 2013, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted a National Strategy on Priorities for Wetland Conservation till 2023 together with an Action Plan to implement these priorities from 2013 till 2017. By 2023, Kyrgyzstan is expected to have in place

- Strong wetland research and monitoring programmes;
- Strong legal, institutional and financial base for wetland conservation with special attention given to the wetlands of international importance;
- Expanded network of Specially Protected Areas that will facilitate better conservation of wetlands and water birds;
- Conserved and restored mountain ecosystems;
- Sustainable management practices of mountain pastures and reduced impacts of pasture use on wetlands
- Improved awareness on the importance of wetlands including those of international importance.

In Uzbekistan, the legal base for conserving and wisely using wetlands has strengthened over the recent years with adoption of legislative acts that focus on conserving biodiversity of wetlands, developing a network of protected areas in the Aral Sea zone, and ensuring sustainable fishery.

Tajikistan has amended the Law on Specially Protected Areas of the Republic of Tajikistan of 2011 to improve protection and management practices of its protected areas.

Key challenges of implementing the Ramsar Convention:

Land use competition between agriculture and conservation of wetlands in the light of growing population and developing economy was one of the recurring themes in the region. Also, finding a balance between water need for irrigated agriculture and environmental flow requirements has been one of the fundamental challenges faced in water management sector throughout the region.

Lack or insufficient level of awareness and knowledge on the importance of wetlands for water supply, biodiversity conservation and livelihoods at all levels including high level decision makers was highlighted by all of the Contracting Parties as a major obstacle.

Another recurring issue was limited financing both by national governments and international community for sustainable and effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

Limited institutional and technical capacity of the national governments to implement wetland conservation programmes is another barrier.

All of the five countries pointed out the absence of national and regional level inventory of wetlands and database of migratory birds, and other important components of monitoring tools and mechanisms.

Disputes over inequitable use of shared water resources across Central Asia remains to be at the center of the water issues in the region. The region hosts a number of international and regional initiatives to promote sustainable and equitable use of transboundary water bodies. Despite varying levels of success of those international and regional efforts to solve water tensions in Central Asia, the five Contracting Parties pointed out the need to improve regional cooperation on the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Country-specific challenges are:

In Kyrgyzstan, lack of systematic and continuous mechanism to monitor ecological character of wetlands, especially as habitats of water birds due to limited technical and financial capacity to develop and put in place such mechanism serves as a major barrier of the wise use and conservation of wetlands.

In Uzbekistan, the absence of a mechanism to attach legal protection status to the territories of international importance including the Ramsar Sites significantly hinders the impacts of the conservation activities carried out at these Sites. For example, Aydar Arnasay lakes system suffers from more than 700 breaches of environmental protection regulations annually despite of having in place periodical monitoring and inspection trips by the relevant state agencies. In terms of ecological character, both of the Ramsar Sites experienced considerable reductions in their water levels - 2.5 meters in the Lake Dengizkul between 2008 and 2014 and 1.5 meters in the Aydar Arnasay lakes system between 2005 and 2012 – due to the instability of hydrological regime.

Tajikistan voiced the lack of funds to carry out an inventory of their wetlands and the associated fauna and flora.

Key opportunities for improving work of the Ramsar Convention in the next triennium:

Transboundary water availability has always been the major issue on the national and regional agendas of the Central Asian countries. Thus, the region hosts a number of initiatives and organizations that work on different aspects of water related issues. One of them is the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) that has been implementing a range of programmes to build human resource capacity in water sector, promote integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach, and enhance local participation in planning and managing water resources. The programme on National Policy Dialogues on IWRM, implemented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

(UNECE), is another initiative that looks to improve coordination and cooperation between sectors to improve water management and facilitate more effective development assistance in the water sector. One of the opportunities to effectively implement the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia is for the Contracting Parties to accentuate linkages between water issues and wetlands conservation, and strengthen cooperation with major national and regional players in the water sector and take advantage of energy, investment, and developments taking place in the water sector.

Work of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia needs to be better linked to other international and regional environmental agreements. Commitments to develop and implement National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans present an important opportunity for the Ramsar Contracting Parties to strengthen linkages between Aichi targets and the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Secretariat made an analysis and identified considerable convergence between “Aichi Biodiversity Targets” of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the targets stipulated in the Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention 2016-2021. For financial and technical capacity building, it is important for the Contracting Parties in Central Asia to actively seek to be part of other multilateral environmental initiatives. For example, this pre-COP12 meeting was attended by the China Center for SCO Environmental Cooperation who has launched SCO Environmental Information Sharing Platform and is now looking forward to launching other two initiatives, namely, Environmental Industry Cooperation and Green Silk Road.

Strengthening cooperation with International Organization Partners (IOPs) active in Central Asia such as the World Wildlife Foundation and Birdlife International presents an array of opportunities to improve the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia. The meeting was attended by a representative from WWF Kazakhstan who presented on WWF activities in Central Asia. WWF programmes and projects have been critical in promoting conservation and effective management of wetlands throughout Central Asia.

During the meeting many of the participants pointed out the importance for the five countries of Central Asia to have a unified voice and present themselves as a regional body to be able to effectively work together with other regional and international bodies mentioned above.

THE WAY FORWARD

Priorities and needs for the next triennium:

Effective management and conservation of the existing Ramsar Sites remains a top priority for the Contracting Parties in Central Asia. The Secretariat and the Contracting parties agreed to work together in preparing Ramsar Information Sheet for all 13 outstanding updates in Central Asia. The Parties voiced the need to prepare and implement effective management plans for all existing Ramsar Sites in Central Asia. In doing so, the Parties would like to receive technical assistance from the Secretariat in developing and applying appropriate instruments for balancing wetland conservation and development projects and competing land uses such as conversion of natural wetlands to pasture.

Designation of new sites will take place as planned and the Ramsar Secretariat will continue to support designation processes as needed.

Conducting inventories of wetlands and migratory as well as resident water birds was repeatedly highlighted as a top priority too for all the Parties. Having a proper and interactive inventory of wetlands in place was seen as crucial in evaluating and monitoring status of wetlands on the habitats provided by wetlands, understanding and assessing ecosystem services generated by wetlands, estimating economic values, and finally, designing and developing adequate management approaches.

While each Party pointed out the need to create a national database on wetlands and water birds, all of them agreed on the importance of linking national databases and launching a regional database and the

associated regional level joint monitoring mechanisms. This agreement stemmed from not only water resources shared between Central Asian countries that necessitates a joint action, but also from a realization that regional approach in the wise use and conservation of wetlands will bring an array of other benefits. To be able to create national databases that will synchronise into one regional database the Parties will need to develop common methodology for inventorizing and monitoring wetlands including flora, water birds and other fauna.

Another area the Parties in Central Asia proposed to prioritize was awareness raising on wetlands conservation and wise use at various levels. Decision-makers at various levels of the government need to be better informed about the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands. Improved awareness and knowledge on the valuable ecosystem services generated by wetlands among decision makers both at the central and local governments is said to have been instrumental for wetland issues to be included in major environment and resource use agendas. Awareness raising on wetlands among key decision makers at all levels of national governments is expected to also facilitate better integration of wetland issues in the planning and implementation of other international conventions and agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. Promoting awareness and understanding of local communities on the importance of conserving and sustainably exploiting wetlands and their resources is equally important.

Apart from awareness raising, capacity building was identified as a priority area too. It is important to ensure that key stakeholders such as local authorities, local communities and non-governmental actors have the knowledge and skills to effectively and jointly manage wetlands, and have access to the best regional and international practices for the conservation and use of wetlands. Of special importance is the need to design and apply appropriate tools and approaches to ensure active participation of local communities in sustainably managing protected areas including Ramsar Sites.

Regional Initiative for Central Asia:

Taking into consideration shared priorities and needs as well as common obstacles they face in conserving and wisely using wetlands, the five Contracting Parties in Central Asia agreed to set up a regional initiative for Central Asia. During the pre-COP12 meeting the Parties and partner organizations held discussions and developed a concept note that elaborates on the aim, specific objectives, and management and coordination of the Regional Initiative for Central Asia (Please see the Annex 3).

The draft concept note together with this report and other supporting documents will be sent to the Contracting Parties. Further work is needed to revise and refine the concept note and develop a full proposal on the regional initiative for Central Asia. The COP12 meeting in Uruguay will provide an opportunity to discuss and revise the concept note and identify the next steps required.

Also, it was proposed to have a post-COP12 meeting for Central Asian countries to revisit the proposal on the regional initiative and better link it with the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and other resolutions of the COP12.

Annex 1: Programme:

6 April, Day 1

0830 - 0900h Registration

0900 – 0920h Opening ceremony with remarks:

- Mr. Nurlan Zhumaev, Deputy Director, State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPE), Kyrgyz Republic;
- Mr. Tobias Salathe, Senior Regional Advisor for Europe, Ramsar Secretariat.

0920 - 0940h Self-introduction of participants

PART 1: PRESENTATIONS

0940 - 1000h Update on the general implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Europe: Presentation by Mr. Tobias Salathe, Ramsar Secretariat (10 min);
Update on the general implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Asia: Presentation by Mr. Llewellyn Young, Senior Regional Advisor for Asia/Oceania, Ramsar Secretariat (10 min).

1000 - 1015h Group photograph

1015 - 1030h Break

1030 - 1230h Joint presentations from representatives of the following Ramsar Contracting Parties on the status of the wetlands in the country, achievements, challenges and opportunities for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and needs for future support. Each presentation will continue for 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes questions and answers.

- Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan;
- General questions and answers (15 – 20 min).

1230 – 1330h Lunch

1330 – 1530h Presentations from Ramsar partner organizations on their work related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Central Asia. Each presentation will be for 15 minutes followed by 5 minutes questions and answers:

- World Wildlife Foundation: Ms. Tatiyana Mikhailovna Bragina, WWF Project Leader for Kazakhstan;
- China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center: Ms. Tu Yingyan, Section Chief of Bilateral Cooperation, Division for China-SCO Cooperation;
- The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia: Ms. Anna Inozemtseva, Programme Specialist, CAREC Water Initiatives Support Programme, CAREC Regional Office for Central Asia;
- The European Union's Water Initiative, National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia (UNECE): Mr. Erkin Orolbaev, National Focal Point for EUWI NPD in Kyrgyz Republic;
- On behalf of UNEP: Mr. Llewellyn Young, Ramsar Secretariat;
- General questions and answers (15 – 20 min).

1530 – 1550h Break

- 1550 – 1730h** Introduction to the Ramsar new website and practical information about COP12: Ms. Solongo Khurelbaatar, Ramsar Secretariat (15 minutes);
Introduction to the RSIS and the hands-on session to learn about the new online RIS template: Ms. Solongo Khurelbaatar, Ramsar Secretariat (85 minutes).
- 1800h** Welcome dinner hosted by the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry, Kyrgyz Republic.

7 April, Day 2

- 0900 - 1020h** Presentations and discussions on the key Draft Resolution that will be discussed at Ramsar COP12:
- Flashback, evolution, overview of the key Draft Resolutions: Presentation by Mr. Tobias Salathe (15 min) followed by questions and answers (5 min);
 - Evaluating and ensuring the effective management and conservation of Ramsar Sites: Presentation by Mr. Llewellyn Young (15 min) followed by questions and answers (5 min);
 - The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2015-2021: Presentation by Mr. Tobias Salathe (15 min) followed by questions and answers (5 min);
 - STRP Workplan 2016 – 2021: Presentation by Mr. Llewellyn Young (15 min) followed by questions and answers (5 min).

- 1020 – 1040h** Break

PART 2: DISCUSSIONS

- 1040 – 1240h** Group exercise on prioritizing short, medium and long-term objectives for improving wetland conservation and wise use in Central Asia both at the national and regional levels in the framework of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2021, STRP Workplan and other key Draft Resolutions.

- 1240 – 1340h** Lunch

- 1340 – 1630h** Group exercise on identifying the key actions and the key implementing mechanisms that will be needed to achieve the objectives agreed upon during the previous session:

At the national level: For example, opportunities of incorporation of wetland and water issues into the NBSAP, opportunities for synergies between the Focal Points of the different environmental MEAs (90 min);

Break for 20 minutes

At the regional level: For example, Ramsar Regional Initiative etc (60 min).

8 April, Day 3

Morning: Travel to Issyk Kul Ramsar Site (Overnight at Issyk Kul)

9 April, Day 4

Early afternoon: Return from Issyk Kul Ramsar Site to Bishkek.
Evening: Participants depart.

Annex 2: List of participants:

No	Name	Position
INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS / МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ УЧАСТНИКИ		
Focal Points / Национальные координаторы		
1.	Mr. Ruslan Akulov /	Head of Section of the Department of Forest Ecosystems and Protected Areas of SAEPF / Заведующий отделом Департамента лесных экосистем и ООПТ Госагентства охраны окружающей среды и лесного хозяйства при Правительстве Кыргызской Республики
2.	Mr. Olimjon Yatimov /	Deputy Head of the State Institutions Research Laboratory for Conservation of Nature Committee on Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan / Заместитель руководителя госучреждения Научно-исследовательской лаборатории <u>охраны природы</u> Комитета по охране окружающей среды при Правительстве Республики Таджикистан
3.	Ms. Evgeniya Lanovenko / Евгения Лановенко	Scientist at the Institute of Gene Pool of Plant and Animals of Academy of Sciences of Republic Uzbekistan / Научный сотрудник Института генофонда растительного и животного мира Академии наук Республики Узбекистан
4.	Mr. Eldar Rustamov / Эльдар Рустамов	National expert on Ramsar Programme of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan / Национальный эксперт Рамсарской программы при Министерстве охраны природы Туркменистана
Experts / Эксперты		
5.	Mr. Askar Davletbakov / Аскар Давлетбаков	Senior Researcher of the Institute of Biology and Soil Sciences Academy in the Kyrgyz Republic / Старший научный сотрудник Биолого-почвенного института Академии наук Кыргызской Республики
6.	Mr. Ruslan Urazaliev / Руслан Уразалиев	Science researcher, Site-management specialist of the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) / Centre for Conservation Biology / Научный сотрудник, специалист по управлению территориями, Центр прикладной биологии, Казахстанская ассоциация сохранения биоразнообразия (АСБК)
7.	Mr. Khamrokul Akhrorov / Хамрокул Ахоров	Chief specialist of the Department on State control on use and protection of fauna and flora at the Committee on Environment Protection under the Government of Tajikistan / Главный специалист Отдела государственного контроля по использованию и охраны животного и растительного мира Комитета по охране окружающей среды при Правительстве Республики Таджикистан
8.	Mr. Sergey Zagrebin / Сергей Загребин	Head of the Department of monitoring for biological resources under State Inspection of the Republic of Uzbekistan on conservation and rational use of animal and vegetative world (Gosbicontrol) / Начальник отдела

			мониторинга за состоянием биоресурсов Государственной инспекции Республики Узбекистан по охране и использованию животного и растительного мира (Госбиоконтроль)
9.	Mr. Atamyrat Veyisov / Атамырат Вейисов		GIS expert on RSPB Programme of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan / Специалист GIS по программе RSPB Министерства охраны природы Туркменистана
Partner Organizations / Гости			
10.	Ms. Yingyan Tu		CAEC – The People’s Republic of China / Китайская Народная Республика
11.	Ms. Tatyana Bragina / Татьяна Брагина		World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in the Republic of Kazakhstan / WWF в Республике Казахстан
12.	Ms. Anna Inozemtseva / Анна Иноземцева		CAREC in the Republic of Kazakhstan / РЭЦЦА в Республике Казахстан
13.	Ms. Erkin Orolbaev / Эрик Оролбаев		UNECE – Kyrgyz Republic / ЕЭК ООН в Кыргызской Республике
Secretariat / Секретариат			
14.	Mr. Llewellyn Young		The Ramsar Convention Secretariat / Секретариат Рамсарской Конвенции
15.	Mr. Tobias Salathe		The Ramsar Convention Secretariat / Секретариат Рамсарской Конвенции
16.	Ms. Solongo Khurelbaatar		The Ramsar Convention Secretariat / Секретариат Рамсарской Конвенции
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC / КЫРГЫЗСКАЯ РЕСПУБЛИКА			
SAEPF / ГАООСИЛХ			
17.	Mr. Nurlan Zhumaev / Нурлан Жумаев		Deputy Director of the SAEPF / Заместитель директора ГАООСИЛХ
18.	Mr. Adylbek Ormonov / Адылбек Ормонов		Director of the Forest Ecosystems and Protected Areas Department of the SAEPF / Директор Департамента лесных экосистем и ООПТ ГАООСИЛХ
19.	Ms. Baglan Salykmambetova / Баглан Салыкмамбетова		Head of International Cooperation Department of the SAEPF / Начальник отдела международного сотрудничества ГАООСИЛХ
20.	Ms. Elmira Kachibekova / Эльмира Качибекова		Chief specialist of the Forest Ecosystems and Protected Areas Department of the SAEPF / Главный специалист Департамента лесных экосистем и ООПТ ГАООСИЛХ
21.	Ms. Adilya Baratova / Адиля Баратова		Specialist of the International Cooperation Department of the SAEPF / Специалист отдела международного сотрудничества ГАООСИЛХ
Territorial administrations / Территориальные управления			
22.	Mr. Bakyt Choroiev / Бакыт Чороев		Director of Karatal-Zhapyryk Reserve / Директор Каратал-Жапырыкского заповедника
23.	Mr. Miroslav Amankulov / Мирослав Аманкулов		Director of Biosphere territory "Issyk-Kul" / Директор биосферной территории «Иссык-Куль»
24.	Ms. Anira Kenenbaeva / Анипа Кененбаева		Head of the Department of Science Biosphere territory "Issyk-Kul" / Начальник отдела науки биосферной территории «Иссык-Куль»
International organizations in KR / Международные организации в КР			

25.	Ms. Nazgul Turdumatova / Назгуль Турдуматова		Coordinator of the GEF / UNDP / Координатор проекта ГЭФ / ПРООН
26.	Mr. Chungulov Zholdoshbek / Чунгулов Жолдошбек		NABU in Kyrgyz Republic / Представитель NABU в Кыргызской Республике
27.	Mr. Sergey Kulagin / Сергей Кулагин		The representative of the Kyrgyz Wildlife Conservation Society / Представитель кыргызского общества охраны дикой природы
Academy of Sciences / Академия наук			
28.	Mr. Anatoliy Ostashenko / Анатолий Осташенко		Researcher of the Institute of Biology and Soil Academy of Sciences of the KR / Научный сотрудник Биолого- почвенного инст-та НАН КР

Annex 3: Draft proposal on the Regional Initiative for Central Asia:

1. Background:

At the pre-COP12 meeting for Central Asia that took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic from 6 to 9 April 2015, the five Contracting Parties of Central Asia proposed to set up a Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA) with the believing that it will:

- Promote stronger cooperation and synergies between the five Central Asian countries to effectively implement the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan 2015-2021 at the national and regional levels due to geographic proximity between the countries and the historical, cultural and scientific ties between them;
- Allow the Central Asian Contracting Parties to effectively position themselves as one regional body in regional and international dialogues on the wise use and conservation of wetlands;
- Make it easier to expand networking and strengthen cooperation with other regional and international players in Central Asia;
- Ensure regular and effective communication between the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention and the five Contracting Parties.

Geographically, the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia will cover the territories of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with particular focus on the conservation and wise use of existing and future Ramsar Sites.

The aim of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia will be to support the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia by promoting and strengthening regional cooperation between the five countries of Central Asia.

2. Objectives of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia:

2.1 Coordination and communication:

- To support the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2015-2021 in Central Asia.
- To carry out scientific and technical monitoring of the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2015-2021 in the region.
- To facilitate and ensure effective information flow and continuous communication between the Contracting Parties in Central Asia, and between the latter with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.
- To ensure synergy and coordination between the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia with other regional and international mechanisms related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands;
- To provide a platform for the regular and effective sharing of information related to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Central Asia.
- To engage in regional dialogues to promote the conservation and wise use of wetland issues.

2.2 Designation and management of Ramsar Sites, and the conservation of other important wetlands:

- To promote the effective conservation and wise use of existing and future Ramsar Sites in the region.

- To establish and maintain national inventories of wetlands and wetland biodiversity, especially waterbirds, and to link them into one regional database.
- To develop and apply a common monitoring mechanism to evaluate the status of existing and future Ramsar Sites.
- To develop and apply a common methodology for evaluating ecosystem services generated by wetlands, and estimating their economic values.

2.3 CEPA and capacity building:

- To identify technical capacity building needs in the region and provide trainings and workshops as required.
- To build awareness and knowledge of the general public on the importance of wetland ecosystems and the steps needed for their conservation and wise use.
- To raise awareness of decision makers at all levels on the importance of wetland ecosystems and ensure that wetland issues are included in major environment and resource use agendas.
- To promote continuous transfer of knowledge and best practices between Central Asia and other regions of the world.

2.4 Project development and management

- To initiate and raise funds for projects and programmes in the area of the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Central Asia.
- To oversee and supervise the implementation of future projects and programmes.

It should be noted that the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia will not focus on the management of transboundary water resources initially because of the political sensitivity and potential deadlock involved in water sharing. Instead, it will prioritize on issues that encourage the countries to work together and support each other. As the countries of Central Asia start to work together on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the region and form a good base of regional cooperation they may want to extend their area of work to the issues related to the transboundary water allocation.

3. Governance and membership of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia:

3.1 At the regional level

Membership will be open to government representatives from the five Central Asian countries, intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, platforms, networks, and education and research centers working at the regional level.

The main decision making body of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia will be a Steering Committee with a chair and members elected from the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities on a rotational basis. The Steering Committee will include representatives from the Ramsar Secretariat as well the members of the Initiative.

The main executive body of the Regional Initiative for Central Asia will be a Secretariat's Office based in one of the Contracting Parties of the region. During the pre-COP12 meeting for Central Asia the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan and CAREC Regional Headquarter expressed their interest to host the Secretariat of the Regional Initiative for Central Asia and offered office space, staff on loan and other in-kind contributions.

Detailed Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee and the Secretariat's office will be developed and attached to the full proposal of the Regional Initiative for Central Asia.

3.2 At the national level

At the national level, the Regional Initiative's activities will be implemented by the national Ramsar working groups. The national Ramsar working groups will be created building upon the existing structure of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and extending its membership to the following actors as relevant:

- National non-governmental organizations
- Research institutions
- Focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements and initiatives
- Country offices of regional and international bodies.

4. Follow-up:

It was proposed that the first activity of the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia would be to hold a post-COP12 meeting for Central Asian countries to finalize the proposal for establishing the regional initiative and to link its activities with the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and other Resolutions adopted at COP12. It was agreed that the best time to organize the post-COP12 meeting would be between August and October 2015. The Government of Tajikistan has offered to host the post-COP12 meeting in Dushanbe.

Moreover, the proposal on the Ramsar Regional Initiative needs to be accompanied by an official supporting letter from the participating Contracting Parties. Other organizations interested in joining the initiative will be encouraged to provide a supporting letter.

The Ramsar Regional Initiative will be seeking official endorsement from the 51th Ramsar Standing Committee meeting that will be held in November 2015. Prior to that meeting, the Regional Initiative for Central Asia will submit a plan on its activities for 2016 as well as a request for start-up funding to the Secretariat.

Annex 4: The status of Ramsar Sites in Central Asia

Please note that information in the table below table was extracted from Ramsar COP12 DOC.7 Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Ramsar Site No.	Site name	Country	Designation date	Status of RIS	Article 3.1 listed	Montreux Record listed
2083	Lesser Aral Sea and Delta of the Syrdarya River	Kazakhstan	2012-02-02	Up-to-date		No
2020	Ili River Delta and South Lake Balkhash	Kazakhstan	2012-01-01	Up-to-date		No
1892	Alakol-Sasykkol Lakes System	Kazakhstan	2009-11-25	Up-to-date		No
1872	Naurzum Lake System	Kazakhstan	2009-07-12	Up-to-date		No
1873	Zharsor-Urkash Lake System	Kazakhstan	2009-07-12	Up-to-date		No
1862	Koibagar-Tyuntuygur Lake System	Kazakhstan	2009-05-07	Soon needs to be updated		No
1863	Kulykol-Taldykol Lake System	Kazakhstan	2009-05-07	Soon needs to be updated		No
1856	Ural River Delta and adjacent Caspian Sea coast	Kazakhstan	2009-03-10	Soon needs to be updated		No
108	Lakes of the lower Turgay and Irgiz	Kazakhstan	1976-10-11	No RIS provided since designation	Decrease in water supply that is affecting wildlife, flora and also human settlements dependent on it; Barrages across the River Turgay and its tributaries cut water supply – A file opened in 2012; Waiting for an update on the conditions of the site from AA since 2008.	No
107	Tengiz-Korgalzhyn Lake	Kazakhstan	1976-10-11	Out-of-date		No

	System					
1943	Son-Kol Lake	Kyrgyzstan	2011-01-23	Up-to-date	A file opened in 2012; Updated report received from AA in August 2014.	No
1588	Chatyr Kul	Kyrgyzstan	2005-11-08	Out-of-date		No
1231	Issyk-Kul State Reserve with the Lake Isyk-Kul	Kyrgyzstan	2002-11-12	Up-to-date	A file opened in 2002; Updated report received from AA in August 2014; issue is being actively addressed.	No
1082	Karakul Lake	Tajikistan	2001-07-18	No RIS provided since designation		No
1083	Kayrakum Reservoir	Tajikistan	2001-07-18	No RIS provided since designation		No
1084	Lower part of Pyandj River	Tajikistan	2001-07-18	No RIS provided since designation		No
1085	Shorkul and Rangkul Lakes	Tajikistan	2001-07-18	No RIS provided since designation		No
1086	Zorkul Lake	Tajikistan	2001-07-18	No RIS provided since designation		No
1855	Turkmenbashy Bay	Turkmenistan	2008-02-23	Up-to-date		No
1841	Aydar-Arnasay Lakes system	Uzbekistan	2008-10-20	Soon needs to be updated		No
1108	Lake Dengizkul	Uzbekistan	2001-10-08	Out-of-date		No

The End.