



12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, 1-9 June 2015

Resolution XII.8

Regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

1. RECALLING that regional initiatives under the Ramsar Convention, which include centres for training and capacity building and networks which facilitate cooperation, are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographic regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern;
2. NOTING that the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution VII.19, 1999) provide a framework for promoting international collaboration between Contracting Parties and other partners;
3. ALSO RECALLING that the Contracting Parties recognized the importance of regional initiatives in promoting the objectives of the Convention in Resolution VIII.30 (2002), and subsequently through Resolutions IX.7 (2005), X.6 (2008) and XI.5 (2012), and endorsed a number of regional initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2013- 2015;
4. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution X.6 (2008) adopted *Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 for regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands* to support the implementation of the Convention, and that these *Operational Guidelines* as subsequently amended by Standing Committee for the triennium 2013-2015 serve as a reference for assessing the operation and effectiveness of regional initiatives, replacing the *Guidelines for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands* annexed to Resolution VIII.30;
5. NOTING that during the years 2013-2015, the Standing Committee approved a number of active regional initiatives as fully meeting the *Operational Guidelines*, and noted the substantial progress made by many of the initiatives, based on the annual reports which they submitted during those years;
6. FURTHER NOTING that new regional initiatives will be developed during the 2016-2018 triennium, such as the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), bringing together Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, which will be starting to operate during the second half of 2015; and
7. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the experience gained through the operational years of those regional initiatives, the application of the *Operational Guidelines* in selecting and supporting Initiatives, and the conclusions derived from the review of their effectiveness;

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8. REAFFIRMS the effectiveness of regional cooperation, through networks and centres, in supporting improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan;
9. INSTRUCTS the Standing Committee to undertake a review of the *Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention*, as adopted for 2013- 2015 through Standing Committee Decision SC46-28 and published on the Ramsar website, taking into account issues, among others, of governance, capacity, fundraising, and programmatic approach in alignment with the Ramsar Strategic Plan, and adopt the necessary amendments no later than the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC52);
10. APPROVES the validity and use of the *Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives*, as adopted for 2013-2015, for the period 2016-2018, until the amendments requested are adopted by the Standing Committee;
11. INSTRUCTS all regional initiatives endorsed by the Convention to continue to submit to the Standing Committee annual reports on their progress and operations, and specifically on their success in fulfilling the *Operational Guidelines*, and to continue to submit annual plans according to the timetable and format adopted by the Standing Committee;
12. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to continue to assess annually, based on the reports submitted, according to the format adopted through Standing Committee Decision SC41-21, the functioning of Ramsar regional initiatives in relation to the *Operational Guidelines*, the implementation of the Convention and the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, seeking support from the CEPA Oversight Panel as required;
13. EMPHASIZES the importance for regional initiatives to establish governance and financial structures which are transparent, accountable, and permit and motivate the participation and representation of all their relevant parties, including the participation of government agencies and non-governmental organizations;
14. DECIDES to include financial support in the Convention core budget line “Support to Regional Initiatives”, as listed in Resolution XII.1 on financial and budgetary matters, to support running costs of operational regional initiatives during the period 2016-2018 which fully meet the *Operational Guidelines*;
15. FURTHER DECIDES that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to individual regional initiatives for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 will be determined annually by the Standing Committee, based on the most recent reports and updated work plans to be submitted according to the required format and timetable, and informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance;
16. STRONGLY URGES those regional initiatives that receive financial support from the core budget to use part of this support to seek sustainable long-term funding from other sources, particularly during the second triennium in which they qualify for such support;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other potential donors to support regional initiatives, whether or not they are also receiving funding through the Convention’s core budget, and URGES Contracting Parties geographically related to a regional initiative that have not yet done so to provide formal letters of support as well as financial support;
18. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to publicize at global level regional initiatives as an operational means to provide support for the implementation of the objectives of the Ramsar

Convention to complement the efforts of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities at national level and the regional initiatives themselves;

19. REQUESTS the regional initiatives to maintain active and regular contact with the Secretariat, to ensure that the global Ramsar guidelines are applied and that the strategic and operational objectives of regional initiatives are in full harmony with the Convention's Strategic Plan, and INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to support and advise regional initiatives, according to its means, to reinforce their capacity and effectiveness;
20. REQUESTS the Secretariat to continue publishing information provided by the regional initiatives, including reports on their success in fulfilling the *Operational Guidelines* and work plans, on the Convention's website, to make it accessible for the parties and the public;
21. FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretariat i) to assess the achievements of regional initiatives in delivering technical, administrative and collaborative benefits to the Parties in their regions, as well as their effectiveness and efficiency, ii) to analyse weaknesses, strengths and difficulties of regional initiative implementation and management, and iii) to formulate recommendations for improving the Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention;;
22. URGES STRP members and National Focal Points to apply experiences of regional initiatives in their work;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and INVITES international organizations and regional and subregional multilateral agreements to identify, for possible inclusion among regional initiatives, transboundary river/groundwater basin organizations;
24. INSTRUCTS the Standing Committee to prepare a summary of its annual assessments, which reviews the operations and success of the regional initiatives operating during the period 2016-2018, for Contracting Parties' consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties; and
25. TAKES NOTES of the dialogue and coordination to be established between Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay, in accordance with their possibilities and financial capacities, to develop an integrated vision for the Pantanal region; and ENCOURAGES, given the important role of the conservation and sustainable development of the Pantanal region for the maintenance of ecosystem functions in the countries of the La Plata river basin, this dialogue and the generated efforts to be integrated into the Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin in coordination with Argentina and Uruguay.