



13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
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Draft resolution on Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021 and their Operational Framework

Note from the Secretariat

Through Decision SC54-30, the Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to edit, finalize and publish the draft resolution contained in document SC54-Com.11 and its Annex for consideration at COP13, with both the text of the draft resolution and the Annex placed in square brackets, but otherwise without additional amendment, noting that Parties held a range of views requiring further discussion at the COP.

1. RECALLING that Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention, 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 and its Strategic Plan in specific geographic regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern;
2. ALSO RECALLING that the Conference of the Contracting Parties has recognized the importance of Regional Initiatives in promoting the objectives of the Convention in Resolution VIII.30 on *Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention*, Resolution IX.7 on *Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*, Resolution X.6 on *Regional initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*, Resolution XI.5 on *Regional initiatives 2013-2015 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention* and Resolution XII.8 on *Regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*, and that, at COP12 (Punta del Este, 2015) the Conference of the Parties endorsed a number of Regional Initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2016-2018;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that, at its 12th meeting (COP12), the Conference of the Contracting Parties instructed the Standing Committee, through Resolution XII.8, to undertake a review of the existing *Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives* and to formulate recommendations for their improvement, and that the work undertaken to this end led to the *Operational Framework* provided in Annex 1; and
4. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the experience gained through the operational years of the Regional Initiatives, the application of the Operational Guidelines in selecting and supporting Initiatives, and the conclusions derived from the review of their effectiveness;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

5. REAFFIRMS the effectiveness of regional cooperation through networks and centres, grouped under the term Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), in supporting improved implementation of the Convention on Wetlands and its Strategic Plan 2016-2024;
6. ADOPTS the *Operational Framework for Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, annexed to the present Resolution, to supersede and replace all earlier versions of guidance and the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives;
7. DECIDES that any regional initiative run jointly by several Contracting Parties for improved implementation of the Convention, should comply with the conditions listed in the attached *Operational Framework* in order to be formally recognized under the Convention as a Ramsar Regional Initiative;
8. REQUESTS that Contracting Parties participating in any existing or future RRI endeavour to achieve its full compliance with the attached *Operational Framework*;
9. ENDORSES the existing RRIs listed below as operating in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands until the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14). This list includes:

Four regional Ramsar 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 Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA),
- Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RRC-EA), and

Fifteen 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);

10. REQUESTS that the Standing Committee endorse proposals for new initiatives submitted intersessionally before COP14, based on a positive assessment of the compliance of their structure and work plan with the new *Operational Framework for Regional Initiatives*;

11. INSTRUCTS the above-listed RRIs and any new RRI to submit annual reports on their compliance with the new *Operational Framework*, according to the format approved by the Standing Committee, in order to maintain their formal recognition as an RRI;
12. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to open the call for proposals for new regional initiatives, to be endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties at COP14 or by the Standing Committee at its meetings before COP14;
13. DECIDES to include financial support in the Convention core budget line “Support to Ramsar Regional Initiatives”, as listed in Resolution XIII.xx on *Financial and budgetary matters*, to provide start-up support for the running costs of the RRIs; and that such start-up funding will be provided for not more than two consecutive periods between meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties for RRIs established after COP12¹ and any additional new RRIs, provided that they fully comply with the conditions defined in the *Operational Framework*;
14. DECIDES that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to eligible RRIs for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 will be determined annually by the Standing Committee, based on their most recent annual reports and updated work plans to be submitted in accordance with the required format and timetable, and informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance to the Standing Committee;
15. URGES RRIs 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;
16. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to support as appropriate the fundraising activities of RRIs and the administration of external funds received for their support in accordance with the financial terms of reference of the Convention;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties and other potential donors to support RRIs, whether or not they are also receiving funding through the Convention’s core budget, and URGES Contracting Parties that are geographically related to an RRI and that have not yet done so to provide formal letters of support as well as financial support;
18. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to publicize at the global level RRIs as a mechanism to provide international cooperation and support for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention that complements the efforts of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities at the national level;
19. REQUESTS that the RRIs maintain active and regular contact with the Secretariat, and INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to advise RRIs on how to reinforce their capacity and effectiveness;
20. REQUESTS that the Secretariat continue publishing on the Convention’s website information provided by the RRIs, including reports on their success and work plans;
21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to invite regional intergovernmental, international and non-governmental organizations, including transboundary river and groundwater basin organizations, to participate in RRIs;

¹ This concerns the Ramsar Regional Initiatives for the Senegal River Basin, the Amazon River Basin, Central Asia, and the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative, and any additional new RRI, provided that they fully comply with the conditions defined in the *Operational Framework*.

22. INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to prepare a summary assessment of the operations and success of the RRI's operating during the period 2019-2021 for consideration by the Standing Committee and submission to COP14; and
23. REPEALS and replaces the following Resolutions on RRI's that each focused on a specific time period:
- Resolution VIII.30 (2003-2005),
 - Resolution IX.7 (2006-2008),
 - Resolution X.6 (2009-2012),
 - Resolution XI.5 (2013-2015), and
 - Resolution XII.8 (2016-2018).]

[Annex 1

Operational Framework for Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Section 1: Purpose of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 1.1 The purpose of Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) is to promote regional cooperation between Contracting Parties, and other members if appropriate, for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in specific regions.
- 1.2 RRIs aim to increase the capacity of Contracting Parties in specific regions to implement the Convention and the Resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties and to achieve the goals and targets of the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan.

Section 2: Endorsement and Recognition of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 2.1 The Conference of the Parties formally recognizes a list of RRIs that operate within the framework of the Convention through a Resolution. This recognition is granted for the period until the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP).
- 2.2 The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands may intersessionally endorse a new Ramsar Regional Initiative proposed by Contracting Parties. Such endorsement is valid until the next COP.
- 2.3 The Standing Committee may also propose to the Conference of the Contracting Parties to withdraw the recognition of an RRI that has been endorsed at the previous COP, if the RRI fails to report on its activities or no longer complies with this *Operational Framework*.
- 2.4 To fulfil the criteria for formal recognition as a “Ramsar Regional Initiative”, the partners in a regional cooperation mechanism must comply with the conditions listed in this *Operational Framework*.

Section 3: Status of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 3.1 RRIs formally recognized by the Convention are constituted by the Contracting Parties and led by the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities as operative means to support the efficient implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 The Administrative Authorities responsible for the implementation of the Convention at national level are also responsible for the development of the RRI and its work programme in which they take part.
- 3.3 The work programmes of RRIs respond to relevant Resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties and to Decisions taken by the Standing Committee intersessionally and support the implementation of Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024.

Section 4: Role of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 4.1 RRIs add to national action plans and work programmes for wetland conservation, management and restoration, to coordinate activities at regional level, carried out jointly by a number of collaborating Parties to the Convention.

- 4.2 RRIs provide additional capacity to focus on the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in the region, notably through the development and execution of regional projects, training courses and other regional capacity-building activities.
- 4.3 The provision of training and capacity-building opportunities must be focused on, but not restricted to, national Administrative Authorities, and include all relevant stakeholders as appropriate.
- 4.4 Beyond the regional cooperation of national Ramsar Administrative Authorities, RRIs are encouraged to work in partnership with additional relevant organizations, notably with the International Organization Partners of the Convention and other suitable partners.
- 4.5 RRIs do not undertake tasks assigned to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and do not act as regional offices of the Secretariat.

Section 5: Mandate of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 5.1 RRIs develop their mandate in accordance with the purpose and role of RRIs described in this *Operational Framework*.
- 5.2 RRIs work with national focal points designated by the Parties for scientific and technical matters (for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, STRP) and for the Convention's programme on communication and outreach (Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness, CEPA), in order to increase the implementation capacity in the region.
- 5.3 RRIs submit reports of progress in their work and financial summaries at the end of each year, together with a work plan and budget for the following year. This enables the Standing Committee to confirm that they comply with the *Operational Framework* and, where appropriate, to allocate Ramsar Convention core budget start-up funding to RRIs that are eligible and request it.

Section 6: Governance of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 6.1 Contracting Parties participating in an RRI establish their own governance and advisory mechanisms in order to provide coordination, guidance and insight in a transparent and equitable manner. The Standing Committee verifies that such administration agreements are compatible with this *Operational Framework* and under the framework of the Convention.
- 6.2 The governing mechanism of each RRI meets regularly, provides guidance, defines mandates, rules and principles of procedure, and monitors the RRI's work programme and resources. It manages the activities of the RRI and provides its members, observers and partners with relevant information. Operating procedures of each RRI are made public and shared with the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.
- 6.3 The Ramsar Convention Secretariat participates in the governing mechanism of each RRI. The specific tasks of the Secretariat are: to make it aware of the need for the RRI to comply with the programme and priorities of the Convention and the requests formulated by the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the Standing Committee; to encourage the RRI to make optimal use of Ramsar Convention tools and the experience and advice provided by working panels (STRP and CEPA bodies); and to facilitate the dissemination of experience from the RRI into global Convention processes.

Section 7: Financing of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 7.1 Contracting Parties and other members that participate in an RRI are supporting the RRI in which they take part and identify donors that are willing to provide additional support, notably through specific projects and cooperation programmes.
- 7.2 The Standing Committee allocates Convention core budget start-up support funds on an annual basis to new RRIs that request it in their annual reports.
- 7.3 RRIs must take the necessary steps to achieve financial sustainability from a variety of sources, as well as to establish mechanisms and procedures to ensure their operation beyond specific project periods, and to prevent RRIs from becoming dependent and exposed to the availability of a single major donor only.]