Workshop to develop a Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia

REPORT

Dushanbe, the Republic of Tajikistan
10 – 13 November, 201

Acknowledgements:

This workshop was made possible with generous financial support from the Government of Japan. On behalf of the Central Asian Parties as well as other stakeholders of the workshop, the Ramsar Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the Government of Japan for the kind support. Also, the Ramsar Secretariat would like to thank the host, the State Committee of Environmental Protection of Tajikistan, for the generous logistical and financial support.

The workshop participants visited the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve that is part of the Lower part of Pyandj River Ramsar Site.
1. **Background:**

During the Ramsar Pre-COP12 meeting for the Central Asian Contracting Parties held in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) in April 2015, the representatives from all the five Parties (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), agreed to establish a Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA). The broad aim of this Initiative is to contribute to the effective conservation and wise use of all important wetlands in Central Asia through promoting and strengthening regional cooperation among the five Central Asian Parties. For more information about Ramsar Regional Initiatives and how they support the Convention’s implementation around the world please click the following link: [http://www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-regional-initiatives](http://www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-regional-initiatives).

During the same workshop, the participants developed a draft proposal for the Initiative exchanging preliminary ideas about the geographical coverage of the Initiative’s activities, specific objectives, governance structure, membership and hosting arrangements.

It was also agreed that the Parties would meet again later in 2015 to finalize the proposal for the Initiative and submit it to the 51st Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee (SC51) for review and formal endorsement. After a series of consultations with the Parties as well as the host country, it was agreed to hold the workshop to finalize the proposal for the RRI-CA from 10 to 13 November 2015 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

2. **Objectives:**

This regional workshop served a successful and timely platform for the five Central Asian Parties as well as other relevant stakeholders to discuss and subsequently, adopt the documents critical for formally establishing the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia including:

- A full proposal for the RRI-CA following a template proposed by the Ramsar Secretariat (for the copy of the proposal please click the following link:

- A financial plan and a work plan for the RRI-CA for 2016 (annexed to the full proposal for the RRI-CA);

3. **Participants:**

The workshop was attended by about 30 participants including:

- Two representatives of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities from each of the five Central Asian Parties;
- Representatives from the following international organizations:
  - Fauna and Flora International (FFI)
  - International Union for Conservation of Nature – Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN-EECA)
  - Japanese Embassy in Tajikistan
  - Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
  - Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC)
  - UNEP Sub-regional office for Central Asia
  - World Wide Fund for Nature of Russia (WWF Russia);
- Two representatives from the Ramsar Secretariat;
• Representatives from relevant ministries and agencies within the Government of Tajikistan (Please find the full participants’ list of the workshop in Annex 1).

4. Structure:

The workshop comprised two major parts: discussion sessions and a field visit. The discussion sessions were structured to fully address the questions in the new template provided by the Ramsar Secretariat for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives that plan to seek formal endorsement by the Ramsar Standing Committee (Please see the full programme of the workshop in Annex 2).

A one-day field trip was made to the Tigrovaya Balka Nature Reserve that is part of the Lower part of Pyandj River Ramsar Site.

5. Working languages:

Russian and English with simultaneous interpretation.

6. Proceedings and summary of major discussions:

![During the field trip the participants were warmly welcomed by the local authority and schoolchildren of the village.](image)

The workshop was opened by welcoming speeches from the Government of Tajikistan, Embassy of Japan in Tajikistan, and the Ramsar Secretariat.

The Ramsar Secretariat gave a short presentation sharing experiences of how Ramsar Regional Initiatives in other regions operate, introduced the draft proposal for the RRI-CA that was re-written into the template developed by the Secretariat for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and identified the sections that needed more discussion and revision. Then, the representatives of the five Central Asian Parties commenced reviewing the proposal section by section in accordance with the programme. The items that invited in depth deliberations include:

a). Stakeholder involvement:

- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan re-affirmed their interest to participate in the Initiative.
- Uzbekistan saw a clear need for making efforts towards better implementation of the Convention in Central Asia by improving cooperation and coordination between the countries concerned. However, Uzbekistan did not agree with the proposal to establish a Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia as it views such coordination mechanism as a duplication of other forms of coordination already present in the region. Therefore, Uzbekistan stated that they would not participate in the Initiative at the moment but agreed to reconsider its position in due time if needed.
- Tajikistan, who had previously expressed their interest to participate in the Initiative and even provided a letter of support, decided to withdraw their interest because Tajikistan’s offer to host the Initiative did not gain support from the other Parties.
- Nevertheless, it was agreed that geographical coverage of the Initiative’s activities should still aim at primarily involving all the five Central Asian Parties but then later on involve other neighboring countries such as China, Iran (I.R.) and Afghanistan if needed.
- IUCN-EECA, JICA and WWF Russia formally expressed their readiness to support the Initiative from technical, capacity building and financial aspects as relevant.

b). Governance and advisory mechanisms:

- Rigorous discussions were held around what type of governance and advisory mechanism would be required to facilitate effective coordination between the Parties participating in the Initiative. Many of the Parties saw no need for setting up a separate structure/legal entity for the RRI-CA as it may simply add another layer of bureaucracy in decision making.
- Instead, the majority of the Parties agreed on creating a Coordination Committee that will comprise the Ramsar National Focal Points or their appointees as a main decision making body of the Initiative. There were different opinions about who would handle the day to day coordination and communication needs of the RRI-CA, and how it would be handled. The final agreement reached between the three participating Parties was to hire a staff (Technical Secretary) with adequate language and technical skills that would be hosted by a suitable regional organization and the staff would provide technical and administrative support to the Coordination Committee (See Annex 3).
- Tajikistan strongly recommended setting up the RRI-CA in a form of a regional center and offered to host it (if such center is created) under the National Biodiversity and Biosecurity Center of Tajikistan. However, the other Parties considered that this was in conflict with their intention to avoid establishing a separate structure/legal entity for the RRI-CA, at least in the immediate future, and so the offer was not discussed further.

c). Hosting:

- Hosting of the staff that will be hired to handle the day to day functioning of the RRI-CA was another issue that participants debated upon. During the Pre-COP12 meeting in Bishkek, CAREC and the Government of Kyrgyzstan expressed their interest to host the Initiative. During the Dushanbe meeting, the participants developed a list of criteria to review the two hosting offers. In the process, the delegates from Kyrgyzstan withdrew their hosting offer as they saw CAREC more suited to host the Technical Secretary of the Initiative. However, during the subsequent discussions CAREC announced that it will host the Technical Secretary of the Initiative only if all the five countries joined the Initiative and agreed to CAREC’s hosting proposal. As Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were unable to join the Initiative in the immediate future (see above), then CAREC was not able to host the Technical Secretary of the Initiative.
- Nevertheless, an interim solution was found to postpone the hiring process of the Technical Secretary and to have the Ramsar Secretariat handle the day to day functioning of the Initiative.
7. **Major Outputs:**

The outputs from the workshop were the development of a:
- Full proposal for the establishment of the RRI-CA following the template proposed by the Ramsar Secretariat;
- Financial plan for the RRI-CA for 2016 that requested USD 30,000 from the core budget of Ramsar Convention;
- Work plan for the RRI-CA for 2016;
- Selection criteria for hosting the Technical Secretary of the Initiative.

8. **Next milestones:**

The proposal for the RRI-CA was submitted to the Ramsar SC51 that took place in November 2015. However, its adoption was postponed till next SC meeting along with proposals of other initiatives as SC51 did not have time to discuss them. The proposal will be introduced to SC52 in June 2016 for adoption and allocation of funding from the core budget of Ramsar Convention.

In the meantime, the Parties with support from Ramsar Secretariat who is acting as an interim coordinator/secretary of the Initiative have already started to take steps in accordance with the work plan that was prepared during the workshop in Dushanbe. One of the major administrative tasks is to set up a Coordination Committee of the Initiative. Presently, the Terms of Reference for the Coordination Committee are being developed jointly with the Parties. On the programmatic side, the key Ramsar publications that need to be available in Russian have been identified and sent for translation.

Also, the Ramsar Secretariat has begun discussions with partners such as CAREC and IUCN-EECA to raise funds to implement projects along the priorities set for the Initiative in the next three years.

---

### Annex 1: Participants’ list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. COUNTRY DELEGATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazakhstan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Mr. Bakytbek Duysekeev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mr. Evgeniy Bragin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kyrgyz Republic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mr. Ruslan Akulov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mr. Bakit Irsalieva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tajikistan</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mr. Khayrullo Ibodzoda</td>
<td>Chairman, Committee for Environmental Protection, Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, (Ramsar National Focal Point)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:muhit@hifzitabiat.tj">muhit@hifzitabiat.tj</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mr. Neimatullo Safarov</td>
<td>Head, National Center for Biodiversity and Biosafety, (Convention on Biological diversity National Focal Point)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nsafarov@biodiv.tojikiston.com">nsafarov@biodiv.tojikiston.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mr. Khisravshoh Shermatov</td>
<td>Chief Specialist, National Center for Biodiversity and Biosafety</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shermatov.khisrav@gmail.com">shermatov.khisrav@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Turkmenistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mr. Eldar Rustamov</td>
<td>Wetland expert, Project “IBAs in Turkmenistan”, Ministry of Nature Protection, (Ramsar National STRP Focal Point)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elldaru@mail.ru">elldaru@mail.ru</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ms. Shirin Karieva</td>
<td>Manager of the joint project by RSPB and the Ministry of Nature Protection on “Conservation of Birds and Biodiversity in Turkmenistan”; Focal Point for the SBSTTA of the Convention on Biological Diversity, (Ramsar Convention National Working Group Expert)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shirinkarryeva@mail.ru">shirinkarryeva@mail.ru</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Uzbekistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Mr. Sergey Zagrebin</td>
<td>Head, Division of the State Inspection on Fauna and Flora Protection, State Committee for Nature Protection</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Zagrebin66@mail.ru">Zagrebin66@mail.ru</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Mr. Isломov Jamshed</td>
<td>Assistant Adviser for Asia/Oceania, Secretariat of Ramsar Convention</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sng@tiv.uz">sng@tiv.uz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2. Ramsar Secretariat</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Mr. Lew Young</td>
<td>Senior Adviser for Asia/Oceania, Secretariat of Ramsar Convention</td>
<td><a href="mailto:YOUNG@ramsar.org">YOUNG@ramsar.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Ms. Solongo Khurelbaatar</td>
<td>Assistant Adviser for Asia/Oceania, Secretariat of Ramsar Convention</td>
<td><a href="mailto:asia.oceania@ramsar.org">asia.oceania@ramsar.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3. International Organizations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mr. Abdulhamid Kayumov</td>
<td>Director, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) in Tajikistan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:akayumov@carececo.org">akayumov@carececo.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Mr. Boris Erg</td>
<td>Director, Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Boris.Erg@iucn.org">Boris.Erg@iucn.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Mr. Kioshi Ishii</td>
<td>Permanent Representative Japan International Cooperation Agency in Tajikistan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ishii.Kiyoshi@iica.go.jp">Ishii.Kiyoshi@iica.go.jp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>OR Mr. Takuro Fujii</td>
<td>Assistant Representative Japan International Cooperation Agency in Tajikistan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Fujii.Takuro@jica.go.jp">Fujii.Takuro@jica.go.jp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>OR Mr. Azizbek Sattorov</td>
<td>Programme Officer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:SattorovAzizbek.TJ@jica.go.jp">SattorovAzizbek.TJ@jica.go.jp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Ms. Natalia Alekseeva</td>
<td>Head, Subregional Office for Central Asia, UNEP Regional Office for Europe</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Natalia.alexeeva@unep.org">Natalia.alexeeva@unep.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Ms. Olga Pereladova</td>
<td>Director, Central Asia Programme, World Wildlife Fund - Russia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:OPereladova@wwf.ru">OPereladova@wwf.ru</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Ms. Saltanat Zhakenova</td>
<td>Manager, Environmental Management Program, Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:szhakenova@carececo.org">szhakenova@carececo.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Mr. Chie Tamura</td>
<td>Embassy of Japan in Tajikistan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:support@db.mofa.go.jp">support@db.mofa.go.jp</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Mr. Ubayd Gulamadshoev</td>
<td>Director, Fauna &amp; Flora International, Tajikistan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ubayd.Gulamadshoev@fauna-flora.org">Ubayd.Gulamadshoev@fauna-flora.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Mr. Azizullo Ismatzoda</td>
<td>Director, Forestry Agency</td>
<td><a href="mailto:muzaffar1961@rambler.ru">muzaffar1961@rambler.ru</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Ms. Firuza Nosirova</td>
<td>Leading expert, Committee for Environmental Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Madibron Saidzoda  
Director, State Agency for the Protected Areas, Forestry Agency  
saidov_madibron@mail.ru

Ms. Oykhon Sharipova  
Deputy Chairman, Committee for Environmental Protection  
muhit@hifzitabiat.tj

Ms. Tatiana Novikova  
Deputy Head, National Biodiversity and Biosafety Center  
biodiv@biodiv.tojikiston.com

Ms. Zarina Nazarova  
Deputy Chairman, Regional Committee for Nature Protection, Khatlon Region  
nzarina@mail.ru

Research Institutions in Tajikistan

Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov  
Chief Researcher, Research Laboratory for Nature Protection  
ddilovar@gmail.com

Mr. Vladimir Lekarkin  
Researcher, Research Laboratory for Nature Protection in Tajikistan  
vlekarkin@mail.ru

Independent consultant in Tajikistan

Mr. Jorg Dinkelaker  
Independent Consultant  
jdinkelaker@gmx.net

Annex 2: Programme of the workshop

(Note: the Ramsar Secretariat developed a template for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives and as specified above, the main aim of the workshop was to fill in this template and its annexes. The programme below provides a schedule for filling in all the questions in the template and its annexes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30 – 09:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 09:00 – 09:15 | • Welcoming remarks (government of Tajikistan, embassy of Japan, Ramsar Secretariat)  
• Introduction to the aims of the workshop (Ramsar Secretariat) |
| 09:15 – 10:00 | Presentations on:  
• Result of the Ramsar Pre-COP12 meeting for Central Asian Contracting Parties held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; 12th Conference of Parties and the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 (Ramsar Secretariat)  
• Ramsar Regional Initiatives: best practices, lessons learnt, governance, financing, operational guidance (Ramsar Secretariat)  
• Draft proposal for the RRI-CA and identification of the gaps (Ramsar Secretariat) |
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Break and group photograph |
| 10:30 – 12:30 | Discuss and reach consensus on:  
Q1. Implementation of the Ramsar Approach  
Q2. Strategic and operational targets  
Q3. Geographical region covered  
Q4. Stakeholder involvement  
Q14. Political support for the initiative  
Q10. Effective regional cooperation  
Q6. Identity of the initiative  
Q12. Increased visibility for Ramsar  
Q11. Optimal use of Ramsar tools |
| 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch |
| 13:30 – 15:00 | Discuss and reach consensus on:  
Q8. Governance and advisory mechanisms  
Q9. Regulations for the governance and coordination bodies of the initiative |
| 15:00 – 15:30 | Break |
| 15:30 – 17:30 | Discuss and reach consensus on:  
Q5. Coordination of day-to-day activities  
Q7. Coordination and supervision of regional projects |
Annex 3: Flow diagram explaining the relationship between the Coordination Committee, Chair of the Coordination Committee, Technical Secretary, hosting organization, Ramsar Secretariat, and observer organizations for the Ramsar Regional Initiative – Central Asia.

Chair: Is elected from one of the Ramsar National Focal Points of the member countries. Supervises the TS to ensure that his/her work follows the annual work plan set out by the Coordination Committee. The Chair rotates every 3 years after each Ramsar COP.

Members: Meets annually to review the report from the previous year, and to decide the work plan for the coming year.

Observers: Provides technical advice to the Chair and members. Does not have any decision making powers.