

Subgroup on Finance and
Agenda item 9

**Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention
during the period 2009-2012**

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the update on progress with the work of the Regional Initiatives it endorsed during its 40th and 41st meetings (May 2009, April/May 2010) as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2009-2012. Standing Committee is also requested to withdraw consideration from three inactive initiatives (for Pacific Islands, Himalayan, Lake Chad Basin) as operating under the Convention 2009-2012.

The Standing Committee is asked to allocate Ramsar core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for 2011, as outlined in the table in paragraph 13 below. The funding allocation proposal for 2011 includes dedicated Ramsar core budget funds plus annual voluntary donations for Regional Initiatives in Africa received from several African states to date by the Secretariat (according to the request expressed in paragraph 23 of Resolution X.2 on financial and budgetary matters), as well as allocated funds for 2010 accrued for regional activities in 2011, as detailed in the table.

Standing Committee is invited to note that the Secretariat will prepare a review of the success of Regional Initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention 2009-2012, in response to the request expressed in paragraph 17 of Resolution X.6, for the next meeting of the Standing Committee (SC43) and to serve as an information paper providing a background to the draft Resolution on Regional Initiatives 2013-2015 for the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11). This paper will address strengths and weaknesses experienced during the operation of Regional Initiatives and offer proposals for improvements.

Summary of developments since COP10 (November 2008)

1. During its 40th meeting (May 2009), Standing Committee endorsed 12 Regional Initiatives as operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention for 2009-2012 and took a number of decisions to facilitate their operations and regular reporting, as requested by Resolution X.6 adopted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10). The 12 endorsed initiatives (cf. Decision SC40-18) are listed in the table below in the column “endorsement by SC40 in 2009” with the sign ☺, including the Himalayan Initiative endorsed on condition that agreement would be reached on outstanding points. Three additional initiatives were endorsed “provisionally” for one year, and the Standing Committee recognized two further initiatives as “under development”. About two additional initiatives, “no information” on progress with their work had been submitted. SC encouraged these to submit updated information for potential approval at the next SC meeting.

2. One year later, during its 41st meeting (April/May 2010), the Standing Committee fully endorsed the three initiatives provisionally endorsed a year earlier and recognized that 14 initiatives (including the three above) were operating, based on submitted progress reports 2009 and work plans for 2010. Four initiatives were not considered fully operational; a progress report 2009 was received from the Initiative for the West African Coastal Zone but without a work and finance plan for 2010 (the remainder of the 2009 Ramsar funding allocation was therefore accrued, and that initiative continued to be considered as under development.) The Himalayan Wetland Initiative did not meet the conditions for its development set by SC40 and was therefore continued also to be considered as under development. No further activities were reported during 2009 for the development of a Pacific Islands initiative, and SC41 therefore considered it as being on hold. And no information was received from the Niger River Basin and Chad Basin initiatives, despite several requests by the Secretariat.

Current situation (March 2011)

3. One year later again, prior to the 42nd meeting of Standing Committee, the situation can be summarized as shown in the table below: 14 initiatives have submitted a progress report of their work in 2010 and their work plan for 2011 and can therefore be considered operational in 2011 (marked with ☺ in the table). The combined annual progress reports for 2010 and work plans for 2011 of these initiatives, according to the format adopted by SC41 (Decision SC41-21), can be found on the Convention's website at http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-standing-sc42-inits/main/ramsar/1-31-41%5E25077_4000_0.
4. The Pacific Islands and Himalayan Wetlands Initiatives have not been developed any further since SC41. As it is highly unlikely that they will become operational in the short term, it is suggested that they no longer be considered as operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during the period 2009-2012. No information has ever been submitted to the Secretariat on the work of the Lake Chad Basin initiative, and it is therefore suggested that this initiative no longer be considered as operating in the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012. Nevertheless, Standing Committee (at its 46th meeting in 2013) may consider any of these initiatives as operating during the period 2013-2015, after the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11), should they submit information about future activities to the Secretariat.
5. At COP7 in 1999 (through Resolution VII.26), the Contracting Parties approved the establishment of a Regional Ramsar Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama City. The centre became operational in 2004 and is therefore the longest operating regional Ramsar centre for training and capacity building. This has given it a significant opportunity to gain valuable experience and to learn helpful lessons in terms of operating and coordinating the work of a regional centre. A recent evaluation has led to a number of recommendations which are currently being acted upon by the host country in cooperation with the Ramsar Parties in the Western Hemisphere and the Secretariat. Due to ongoing structural and staff changes, the training activities of the centre were substantially reduced during 2010, to the point that no progress report and work plan for 2011 was submitted in time for SC42. However, the Secretariat works closely with the Government of Panama and interested Parties to make the centre rapidly operational and effective again, and it is anticipated that there will be a progress report and 2012 work plan submitted to the next meeting of Standing Committee.

Due to these exceptional circumstances, the Ramsar financial contribution allocated for activities of the centre in 2010 is proposed to be accrued to cover needs in 2011.

6. No further information has been received from the Nile River Basin initiative since SC41 on their work in 2010. The Secretariat is currently following this up and hopes to be in a position to report on progress to the next meeting of Standing Committee.
7. After a period of silence, the initiative for wetlands in the West African Coastal Zone updated the Secretariat about progress with work in 2010 and its plans for 2011, and the Niger River Basin initiative has for the first time submitted a progress report and with it a work plan for 2011. The work and reporting of the remaining 12 regional initiatives continued without interruption according to plan. Out of the 14 operational initiatives (i.e., those marked with ☺ in the table below), nine are requesting financial support for their activities planned in 2011.

Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2009-2012 overview	☺ = endorsement by SC40 in 2009	☻ = additional endorsement by SC41 in 2010 ¹	☺ = progress report 2010 and work plan 2011 submitted	Ramsar funding request for 2011
Regional centres for:				
Eastern Africa (Kampala)	☺	operating	☺	yes
Western Hemisphere (Panama)	☺	operating	<i>no information</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
Central and Western Asia (Ramsar)	☺	operating	☺	yes
Eastern Asia (Changwon)	☺	operating	☺	no
Regional networks for the:				
Nile River Basin	☺	operating	<i>no information</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
Lake Chad Basin	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
West African Coast	<i>under development</i>	<i>under development</i>	☺	yes
Niger River Basin	<i>no information</i>	<i>no information</i>	☺	yes
High Andean	☺	operating	☺	yes
La Plata River Basin	☺	operating	☺	no
Caribbean	<i>provisionally</i>	☻ operating	☺	yes
American Mangroves	<i>provisionally</i>	☻ operating	☺	yes
East-Asian Australasian Flyway	☺	operating	☺	no
Himalayan	☻ <i>conditionally</i>	<i>under development</i>	<i>no information</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
Pacific Islands	<i>under development</i>	<i>on hold</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
Mediterranean	☺	operating	☺	no
Carpathian	☺	operating	☺	yes
Nordic-Baltic	☺	operating	☺	no
Black Sea Coast	<i>provisionally</i>	☻ operating	☺	yes

¹“operating” implies that progress report 2009 and work plan 2010 were submitted

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funding to Regional Initiatives for 2011

8. Among the operational initiatives, the regional centre for Eastern Asia (in Changwon, Republic of Korea) and the regional networks for the La Plata River Basin, the East-Asian Australasian Flyway, the Mediterranean (MedWet) and the Nordic-Baltic regions are not requesting a financial contribution from the Ramsar core budget for their activities in 2011. The remaining nine initiatives (2 centres and 7 networks) are requesting a financial contribution from the core budget, according to the details shown in the table below. All

funding requests are calculated in Swiss Francs (CHF). Where the requests submitted used other currencies (USD, EUR), a simplified exchange rate of 0.9 CHF/USD (United States Dollar) and of 1.3 CHF/EUR (Euros) was applied.

9. The two regional centres request together from the Ramsar core budget a sum of CHF 112,000. The Ramsar core budget allocates an amount of CHF 100,000 for such funding in 2011 (Resolution X.2, Annex I, budget line C). Seven regional networks request a total sum of CHF 206,070 from the core budget for their activities in 2011, whereas the core budget allocated an amount of CHF 179,190 for such funding in 2011.
10. The COP10 Resolution on financial and budgetary matters (Resolution X.2) gratefully acknowledges in paragraph 23 “that the countries of Africa assessed (in line with paragraph 15 above) at less than CHF 2000 have agreed to increase their payments to that level. The difference between CHF 2000 and their assessment will be in the form of a voluntary contribution specifically earmarked for African Regional Initiatives”. To date the Secretariat has received an amount of CHF 14,000 earmarked to this end and proposes to allocate this amount for activities of the three operational African Regional Initiatives in 2011 (see below).
11. The total sum requested from Ramsar to finance activities of Regional Initiatives in 2011 amounts to CHF 318,070, but the 2011 core budget available for this purpose amounts only to CHF 279,190. Additional voluntary contributions received for African initiatives come to CHF 14,000. This adds to a total of CHF 293,190 available. The shortfall between requested and available moneys is CHF 24,880.
12. Accordingly, the Secretariat’s allocation proposal for 2011, in the table below, has been adjusted to match the CHF 293,190 available. It reduces slightly the funding allocated to those Regional Initiatives which were not yet able to fully use all of their Ramsar funding obtained for activities in 2010, as these initiatives have left-over Ramsar funds at their disposal and it can be anticipated that receiving still a new amount for expenditures in 2011 that is slightly less than requested will not create undue cash flow problems for the smooth progress with their work during 2011. In the unlikely case of these initiatives spending their full 2011 budget during the year, they would still be able to recover potentially remaining small shortfalls in early 2012, e.g., through a renewed financial contribution from the Ramsar core budget for 2012.
13. The Standing Committee is invited to consider allocating the available funding for 2011, including the 14,000 CHF voluntary donations received for African Regional Initiatives, according to the proposal outlined in the table below. When the allocation has been agreed, the Secretariat will rapidly disburse the annual budget allocations to the beneficiary Regional Initiatives, strictly in accordance with the contractual specifications and procedure welcomed by Standing Committee through its Decision SC41-22 in 2010.

Regional Initiative all amounts in CHF (0.9 CHF/USD, 1.3 CHF/EUR)	left over from 2010	total budget 2011	Ramsar request for 2011	allocation proposal for 2011	total Ramsar funding in the past ¹
Regional centres for					
Eastern Africa (Kampala)	28,500	265,000	240,000	35,000	116,357
Western Hemisphere (Panama)	23,643	unknown	none	nil	207,286

Central and West Asia (Ramsar)	90,450	400,500	² 22,000	65,000	220,000
<i>total for centres</i>			<i>112,000</i>	<i>100,000</i>	
Regional networks for					
West African Coast	6,800	52,863	² 26,913	20,000	137,700
Niger River Basin	nil	32,000	20,000	20,000	nil
High Andean	nil	172,640	25,000	25,000	108,000
La Plata River Basin	40,700	40,700	none	nil	20,000
Caribbean	nil	467,550	28,800	28,800	57,000
American Mangroves	nil	45,500	32,000	32,000	50,000
Carpathian	41,000	161,460	² 32,500	29,000	75,000
Black Sea Coast	14,143	55,000	² 40,857	38,390	44,690
<i>total for networks</i>			<i>206,070</i>	<i>193,190</i>	
Total			318,070	293,190	

¹ Up to and including the total allocation for 2010.

² The proposed 2011 request and allocation take into account leftovers from 2010 and express additional needs. For details refer to the individual plans for 2011.

14. Should any of the beneficiary Regional Initiatives not be in a position to contract for their full 2011 allocation, the Secretariat intends to propose that these amounts be instead allocated to cover the costs of regional meetings to be held prior to COP11. The Secretariat will report to SC43 on this matter. (The Regional Initiatives will be able to make new funding requests for their activities in 2012 early in that year, to rapidly cover possible funding shortfalls.)

Analysis of the contribution by Regional Initiatives to the implementation of the Ramsar Convention 2009-2012

15. Resolution X.6 on Regional Initiatives requests “the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, particularly in relation to those initiatives funded by the core budget, to review their success and submit a summary report for consideration at COP11” (paragraph 17).
16. In response to this request, the Secretariat intends to prepare a succinct analysis and evaluation of the work and performance of the Ramsar regional centres and networks that operate in the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012. This analysis is intended to show the added values for Convention implementation through the work of the Regional Initiatives, but also to clarify issues addressed in the “Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 for regional initiatives” adopted through Resolution X.6 that may need adjustment, and possibly to highlight and address missing issues that may merit that. The analysis is intended to serve as an information document for COP11 and as a background for the planned draft Resolution on Regional Initiatives operating under the convention during 2013-2015 (i.e. the period between COP11 and COP12).