

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
44th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Bucharest, Romania, 4 July 2012

DOC. SC44-02

The Standing Committee's intersessional decision concerning Regional Initiatives

Action requested. The Standing Committee is requested to note the decision concerning Regional Initiatives that was taken by the Committee in April-May 2012 through intersessional electronic consultation.

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its 42nd meeting (May 2011) the Standing Committee reviewed the status of the Regional Initiatives operating within the framework of the Convention and approved budget allocations for 2011. In addition, the Committee "agreed to require 2011 reports and requests for 2012 to be submitted by 29 February and make the allocations for 2012 by electronic circulation no later than April 2012" (Decision SC42-20).
2. Accordingly, the Secretariat prepared the attached document, which provided the information necessary for the Standing Committee members to make the 2012 Ramsar core budget allocations to Regional Initiatives for their 2012 operations, and circulated it electronically to SC members in April 2012.
3. As instructed by Decision SC42-20, the Secretariat requested SC members to submit any suggestions for amendment to the proposed decision on 2012 allocations no later than 20 May 2012. As no suggestions for amendments had been received by that date, the proposed decision has been approved by the Standing Committee intersessionally, and the Secretariat has begun carrying it out.
4. The Standing Committee at its 44th meeting is invited to note that intersessional decision so that it can be recorded with the decisions of the present meeting.

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Secretariat Note to Standing Committee
Electronic consultation in April 2012

Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to take note of this update on the operations of the Convention's Regional Initiatives during 2011 and 2012 and to make the necessary Ramsar 2012 core budget funding allocation to those initiatives that requested support for their activities in 2012. The Secretariat is recommending that the Standing Committee agree the following points:

Standing Committee intersessional electronic consultation in April 2012:

The Standing Committee agreed to:

- a) withdraw endorsement of the Nile River Basin Initiative as a Regional Initiative operating under the Convention in 2009-2012,
- b) require reports from all operating initiatives on progress in 2012 and work plans for 2013, including summary financial reports of income and expenditures, to be submitted to the Secretariat by 28 February 2013 in time for the Committee's 46th meeting,
- c) allocate 2012 core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for their operations in 2012 as follows:

Regional centres for:

East Africa (in Kampala)	25,000 CHF
Western Hemisphere (in Panama City)	16,000 CHF

Regional networks for:

West African Coast and Niger river basin	20,000 CHF
High Andean wetlands	10,000 CHF
La Plata river basin	14,000 CHF
Caribbean wetlands	15,000 CHF
American mangroves and reefs	20,000 CHF
Carpathian wetlands	16,560 CHF
Black and Azov Sea coastal wetlands	3,179 CHF

Total	139,739 CHF
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Note: These allocations are in addition to the allocations deferred from 2011 to 2012 via Decision SC43-17.

Standing Committee members are requested to send an e-mail of acceptance of the above decision, or specific suggestions for amendments to the text above, no later than 20 May 2012 to salathe@ramsar.org. No response by that date will be considered as acceptance of the agreement text as proposed above. The Secretariat will subsequently prepare contracts with the Regional Initiatives to receive Ramsar core budget funding allocations for their activities in 2012.

Purpose of this Note

1. Through Decision SC42-20 (taken at its 42nd meeting in May 2011), "The Standing Committee noted progress of the Regional Initiatives that it endorsed at its 40th and 41st meetings as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2009-2012; determined to withdraw consideration from three inactive Initiatives (Pacific Islands, Himalayan, and Lake Chad Basin); approved the 2011 allocations to Regional Initiatives as summarized below; **agreed to require 2011 reports and requests for 2012 to be submitted by 29 February and make the allocations for 2012 by electronic circulation no later than April 2012**; and noted that the Secretariat will prepare a review for SC43 of the success of the Regional Initiative programme to serve as an Information Paper for COP11."
2. This Note refers to the bolded part of Decision SC42-20 cited above and provides the information necessary for the Standing Committee members to make the 2012 Ramsar core budget allocations to Regional Initiatives for their operations in 2012. Standing

Committee members should send an e-mail of acceptance, or their specific suggestions for amendments to the agreement proposed above, to the Secretariat no later than 20 May 2012. No response by that date will be considered as acceptance of the agreement text as proposed above.

Summary of the development of Ramsar Regional Initiatives

3. In 1999, the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) adopted a framework of guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention (Resolution VII.19). It recognized the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), originally launched in 1991, as a model of regional cooperation, based on endogenous efforts and a wide participation of all sectors (Resolution VII.22), and it encouraged the government of Panama to implement its plans to establish a regional Ramsar centre for training and research on wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (Resolution VII.26).
4. These Resolutions formally launched the process of regional cooperation under the Convention. The first two models, of a network for regional cooperation and a centre for regional training and capacity building, rapidly inspired the development of other regional initiatives. In response, in 2002 COP8 adopted guidance for the development of Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention (Resolution VIII.30) and included in the Ramsar core budget a funding line for operational start-up support to regional networks or centres (Resolution VIII.27).
5. Resolution IX.7 (2005) and Resolution X.6 (2008) endorsed a number of specific Regional Initiatives as working within the framework of the Convention and adopted *Operational Guidelines* for them, updating and replacing the earlier guidance from COP8. The Standing Committee was entrusted to monitor the work of the current initiatives, examine and approve new initiatives that meet the Operational Guidelines between meetings of the COP, and allocate the annual amount earmarked in the Ramsar core budget to the approved individual initiatives, based on requests and updated financial and work plans submitted by the initiatives to the Secretariat.
6. Finally, Resolution X.6 (2008) requested the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, particularly for those initiatives funded by the core budget, to review their success and submit a summary report for consideration at COP11. A review of the success of the initiatives operating during the period 2009-2012 was provided to the 43rd meeting of Standing Committee in DOC. SC43-15 in September 2011. An updated version will be provided as an Information Paper to COP11.

Current situation (March 2012)

7. A year ago, prior to the 42nd meeting of Standing Committee in May 2011, fourteen initiatives submitted a progress report for 2010 and plan of their work in 2011 and were therefore considered as operational in 2011 (cf. DOC. SC42-08). Now, one year later, the same fourteen initiatives are considered operational in 2012, though with some limitations explained below:
8. Prior to COP11, three centres are presently operating for regional training and capacity building:
 - in East Africa (established in Kampala),

- in East Asia (established in Changwon),
 - in Central and West Asia (established in Ramsar).
9. Prior to COP11, eleven networks are operating for regional cooperation:
- along the West African coast,
 - in the Niger river basin,
 - in the High Andes,
 - in the La Plata river basin,
 - in the Caribbean,
 - on American mangroves and reefs,
 - along the East-Asian Australasian flyway,
 - in the Mediterranean,
 - in the Carpathians,
 - in the Nordic-Baltic region,
 - along the Black and Azov Sea coast.
10. Out of the four regional centres, those for East Africa and East Asia continue their operations as planned. The centre for Central and Western Asia established in 2006 in the city of Ramsar, I. R. Iran, had a new director appointed in early 2012. Due to this change, the Secretariat has received no report on its operations during 2011 and planned work for 2012. It is hoped that a formal progress report 2011-2012 and work plan for 2013 will be submitted by 28 February 2013, in time for the 46th meeting of Standing Committee in early 2013.
11. In 2011, the Standing Committee was informed that substantial structural and staff changes were being implemented at the regional centre for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) established in Panama City (through paragraph 5 of DOC. SC42-08). The Secretariat continues to provide advice to the host country and interested Parties relating to the centre. It is anticipated that the centre will become fully operational again, hopefully in the latter part of 2012. At that time, it will have available to it the Ramsar financial contribution allocated for its activities in 2010, disbursed in 2011 and still remaining unused, and its 2012 allocation (cf. below).
12. The above list of the eleven operating regional networks has not changed since March 2011. However, Standing Committee is now invited to withdraw endorsement of the initiative for the Nile River Basin. This initiative last submitted a progress report in 2009 and has never received Ramsar core budget financial support.

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds for activities in 2012

Initiatives that do not depend on Ramsar core budget support

13. In 1999 the network for cooperation in the Mediterranean (MedWet) was the first Regional Initiative recognized as operating under the Ramsar Convention. It received start-up funding from the Ramsar core budget during a maximum period of two intervals between meetings of the Conference of the Parties (2003-2008) at a decreasing annual rate (310,930 CHF in total). Since that time the initiative has been fully supported by annual financial contributions of its country members and through specific projects.

14. Three initiatives, the Ramsar centre for East Asia established in Changwon and the two networks for cooperation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and in the Nordic-Baltic region, have never requested Ramsar core budget support and have obtained the necessary financial resources through country and project support. The table at the end of this document shows that these initiatives tend to have (sometimes substantially) higher annual operating budgets than the ones depending (sometimes heavily) on Ramsar core budget co-financing.

Ramsar core budget financial support available for 2012

15. During its 43rd meeting in October 2011, the Standing Committee addressed the difficult budget situation of the Convention, provoked by a shortfall of paid annual dues by some Parties and important currency exchange losses. Standing Committee took a number of decisions to deal with the financial situation including deferring until 2012 any further disbursement of SC42 allocations. The table at the end of this document shows which SC42 allocations were disbursed in 2011 (amounting to 168,200 CHF), and which ones will be disbursed in 2012 (amounting to 124,990 CHF).
16. SC adopted a 2012 core budget providing for the deferred SC42 allocations and an additional 73,000 CHF. The Secretariat is pleased to report that, thanks to additional income, the amount available to allocate in 2012 for the activities of Regional Initiatives in 2012 is 139,739 CHF. This includes 31,800 CHF that was earlier earmarked for initiatives that have remained inactive and have since been withdrawn by Standing Committee, and voluntary donations by African Parties earmarked for African Regional Initiatives (in accordance with para. 23 of Resolution X.2 on budgetary matters adopted by COP10).
17. According to their 2011 progress reports and work plans for 2012 submitted (available in PDF format at www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-standing-sc44-inits/main/ramsar/1-31-41%5E25712_4000_0__), ten initiatives continue to rely on new Ramsar core budget financial support for their activities in 2012. The table at the end of this report provides the details.

Regional initiatives requesting additional Ramsar core budget support for 2012

18. The cumulated requests for new Ramsar core budget contributions for their activities in 2012 of ten initiatives amount to 146,986 CHF. (Requests submitted in United States dollars (USD) or Euros (EUR) have been transferred into Swiss francs (CHF) according to the rate: 0.9 CHF/USD, 1.2 CHF/EUR.) The proposal for how to allocate this sum can be found in the right-hand column of the table at the end of the document, and the details are explained here:
19. Two regional centres submitted finance requests for 2012. Thanks to the generous voluntary donations by African countries, it is possible to allocate the full requested amount to the Regional Ramsar Centre for East Africa in Kampala. In 2012 that centre will receive both its deferred 2011 allocation and a fresh allocation for 2012, giving a total of 60,000 CHF which should fund nearly a third of its planned expenditures. The Regional Ramsar Centre for the Western Hemisphere is for the seventh consecutive year requesting a Ramsar core budget contribution, in addition to the Ramsar allocation for 2010, disbursed but not yet used. The proposed total allocation for activities in 2012 would

cover more than 40 percent of the planned expenditure in 2012, once the centre becomes operational again.

20. Among the nine regional networks, those for the West African coast and the Niger River Basin announce that they will elaborate during 2012 in common a definition of the responsibilities of Parties participating in a regional initiative, advice how to achieve synergies with other partners in the region, a framework for fundraising, and an administrative and financial manual for regional activities. For this work in common, they request an additional Ramsar contribution. The results of this work are likely to be of potential interest also for other Regional Initiatives. The Niger River Basin initiative will focus entirely on this work in 2012, while the initiative for the West African coast will also pursue other work with regional funding support.
21. For the seventh consecutive year, the network for cooperation on High Andean wetlands is requesting a Ramsar core budget contribution, amounting to one third of its planned 2012 expenditures. In line with Resolution X.6 this is likely to be the last year of financial Ramsar core budget support for this initiative.
22. Two initiatives request Ramsar core budget support that covers the entirety of their planned expenditures in 2012: the networks for cooperation in the La Plata River Basin and for wetlands along the Black and Azov Sea coasts. The initiative for American mangroves and reefs requests Ramsar support amounting to three quarters of its planned expenditures in 2012. These three initiatives are still in the start-up phase, but need to find other sources of institutional and financial support as a matter of high priority.
23. The initiatives for wetlands in the Caribbean and the Carpathians request Ramsar core budget support for their activities in 2012 that covers roughly a quarter of their planned expenditures, taking into account unused allocations for 2011 and additional requests for 2012.

Proposal to allocate available Ramsar core budget funding for 2012

24. It is proposed to allocate the available Ramsar core budget amount according to the requests received by the operating initiatives, as shown in the right-hand column of the table below. However, in order to remain within the limit of the Ramsar funds available (139,739 CHF), the allocations to the centre for the Western Hemisphere (only to be operational again in the latter part of 2012) and to the networks that requested 100 percent Ramsar funding for their planned activities in 2012 (La Plata River Basin and Black Sea coastal wetlands) are slightly reduced. It is not anticipated that this will have consequences for their capacities to undertake their work planned for 2012.

	2011				2012				
	<i>total Ramsar funding in the past (including up to 2010)</i>	<i>SC42 allocation for 2011</i>	<i>SC42 allocation disbursed in 2011</i>	<i>SC42 allocation to be disbursed in 2012</i>	<i>real expenditure in 2011</i>	<i>left-over 2011 still available</i>	<i>planned expenditure 2012</i>	<i>additional Ramsar request for activities in 2012</i>	<i>proposed new allocation by Standing Committee for 2012</i>
	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF
<i>regional centres for:</i>									
East Africa (Kampala)	116,357	35,000		35,000	42,000	<i>nil</i>	195,000	25,000	25,000
Western Hemisphere (Panama)	207,286				26,226	27,883	83,700	18,289	16,000
Central and West Asia (Ramsar)	220,000	65,000	65,000		<i>no report provided</i>				
East Asia (Changwon)	<i>nil</i>				445,500	<i>nil</i>	409,500		
<i>regional networks for:</i>									
West African coast	137,700	20,000		20,000	¹⁾ 19,638	229	40,748		
Niger river basin	<i>nil</i>	20,000		20,000	¹⁾ 19,760	³⁾	20,000	²⁾ 20,000	20,000
High Andean	108,000	25,000	25,000		³⁾	2,386	32,386	10,000	10,000
La Plata river basin	20,000				37,762	5,238	21,238	16,000	14,000
Caribbean	<i>nil</i>	28,800	28,800		60,536	27,362	168,000	15,000	15,000
American mangroves and reefs	50,000	32,000	32,000		42,385	25,757	61,000	20,000	20,000
East Asian-Australasian Flyway	<i>nil</i>				4,195,059	137,162	4,872,000		
Mediterranean	310,930				236,957	<i>nil</i>	240,000		
Carpathian	75,000	29,000	17,400	11,600	106,376	22,023	99,720	16,560	16,560
Nordic-Baltic	<i>nil</i>				46,800	102,000	112,800		
Black and Azov Sea coast	44,690	38,390		38,390	4,500	10,473	55,000	6,137	3,179
Totals	1,289,963	293,190	168,200	124,990	5,283,499	360,513	6,411,092	146,986	139,739

- 1) These are commitments that will be honoured with the incoming SC42 allocations to be disbursed in 2012.
- 2) For common activities to serve both networks for the West African coast and the Niger River Basin.
- 3) No information provided.