

## Regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention 2013-2015

### Actions requested:

- Standing Committee is invited to accept the annual reports of progress and to endorse the active four regional centres and eleven regional networks as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 and operating in the framework of the Convention during this period.
- Standing Committee is invited to task the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the governance of a global network of Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building, and to submit it to SC48 for subsequent submission to COP12.
- Standing Committee is invited to allocate the following amounts from Ramsar core budget line D ("Support to regional initiative network and centres") to the following initiatives for their activities in 2014:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| - East African centre                  | CHF 28,000 |
| - Niger river basin network            | CHF 30,000 |
| - La Plata river basin network         | CHF 16,000 |
| - Caribbean network                    | CHF 16,000 |
| - American mangroves and reefs network | CHF 20,000 |
| - Carpathian Wetland Initiative        | CHF 10,000 |

### Introduction

1. The Ramsar Contracting Parties at COP7 in 1999 recognized regional cooperation as an effective way for them to promote and better implement the objectives of the Convention, and adopted Resolution VII.19 providing guidelines for international cooperation, Resolution VII.22 on a collaborative structure for the Mediterranean, and Resolution VII.26 on the creation of a regional centre for training and research in the Western Hemisphere. This triggered the establishment and development of formally established regional cooperation mechanisms which have since been referred to as 'regional initiatives'. This regional cooperation between Parties at international level is realized in two forms: through either physically established *centres* for regional training and capacity building, or *networks* that operate for regional cooperation.
2. The Parties agreed that to be formally recognized as operating under the Ramsar Convention, a regional initiative has to conform to specific guidelines. The original guidelines were adopted through Resolution VII.19 in 1999 and regularly updated since. Most recently, at its 46th meeting in 2013, the Standing Committee endorsed improved 'Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands'.

### Endorsement of regional initiatives that fully meet the Operational Guidelines 2013-2015

3. In 2012 the Parties at COP11 instructed the Standing Committee (through Resolution XI.5) to evaluate the activities of the regional initiatives, their administrative and financial management and their long-term sustainability, and to use the updated Guidelines to determine the level of support (financial or otherwise) during the triennium 2013-2015.
4. For the year 2013, SC46 endorsed 15 regional initiatives as meeting the Guidelines and requested that they report on their steps to address, correct or improve the shortcomings and deficiencies highlighted in paragraphs 7 to 14 of the agenda paper DOC. SC46-11.
5. The Secretariat received annual reports on progress during 2013 and work plans for 2014 from these initiatives; these are available in PDF format at <http://www.ramsar.org/sc47-regional-initiatives>. The annual reports also provide an update on progress made during 2013 to address and remedy the main deficiencies listed in DOC. SC46-11.
6. The four *regional centres for training and capacity building* are encouraged to focus on the following priorities during 2014:
  - The **Ramsar Centre for East Africa** (RAMCEA) in Kampala has established its governance mechanisms and a partnership development plan for its fundraising programme. It should now apply these to develop ambitious projects and programmes for the implementation of the Convention in East African countries.
  - The **Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere** (CREHO) in Panama City needs the critical support of the Government of Panama; its Board of Directors should continue efforts to reach financial sustainability in the short term.
  - The **Ramsar Regional Centre for Central and West Asia** (RRC-CWA) in Teheran is still in a transition phase. It needs to hire a full-time director to guide the work of the centre and to hold a meeting of its Collaborative Management Board, once the Board's members have been confirmed.
  - The **Ramsar Regional Centre for East Asia** in Changwon has been active thanks to generous funding support from the central and provincial governments in the Republic of Korea, and from partners and countries where it holds its courses. The activities of the centre could become more effective if staff were appointed to increase the centre's ability to raise and accept funds from donors.
7. The eleven *regional networks* should focus on the following issues during 2014:
  - The Ramsar networks for cooperation along the **West African coast** (WacoWet) and in the **Niger river basin** (NigerWet) have now the necessary governance mechanisms and a partnership development plan for their fundraising needs. With these tools they should develop ambitious projects and programmes for the implementation of the Convention in their member countries.
  - The Ramsar networks for cooperation in the **High Andean** region, the **La Plata river basin**, and the **Caribbean**, and the network focusing on **American mangroves and coral reefs** have made important progress to comply with the Operational Guidelines. However, they should focus in the coming months on establishing robust funding mechanisms for the further

development of their activities and projects, and an administrative setting that enables them to manage their own funds.

- The **East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership** is continuing to operate successfully with a small secretariat of experienced staff. It has funding for its operations and for its activities due to strong support from its partners in the region.
- The network for regional cooperation in the **Mediterranean** (MedWet) is relocating its secretariat from Greece to France to better integrate the work of the Mediterranean Wetland Observatory in its programme. A new coordinator will have to increase the ownership, support and active participation of MedWet members, and establish the initiative as a key mechanism for water and wetland cooperation during a three-year development phase with funding from the MAVA Foundation.
- The **Carpathian Wetland Initiative** (CWI) continues its project-based activities and their integration into the work and finance plan of the Carpathian Convention. Besides this strategic development, it should develop and activate its governance body and enlarge its membership, which is still too dependent on a few active individuals.
- The cooperation in the **Nordic-Baltic region** (NorBalWet) progresses through the preparation of region-wide projects and initiatives for communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA). The recent focus on peatlands and climate change, and the cooperation with the Arctic Council, are promising developments. The network still needs to better integrate the work of experienced NGOs active in the region.
- The initiative for cooperation on wetlands along the **Black and Azov Sea coasts** (BlackSeaWet) still lacks active leadership, internationally coordinated activities, and coordinated national implementation on the ground. It needs to find financial support for activities beyond 2014 and from outside the Ramsar core budget.

**Action requested:** Standing Committee is invited to accept the annual reports of progress and to endorse the active four regional centres and eleven regional networks as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 and operating in the framework of the Convention during this period.

#### **Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building**

8. For the future, the Secretariat proposes to consider regional centres for Ramsar training and capacity building separately from regional networks. The aims, operations and outputs of regional centres should be coordinated and harmonized so they all provide standard and globally applicable training approaches and products that can be shared, adapted and applied consistently. Working in closer contact with the CEPA Oversight Panel should help make the centres and their outputs more effective. The Secretariat proposes to prepare an operational proposal to this end for SC48 with a view to submitting a draft resolution for COP12.

**Action requested:** Standing Committee is invited to task the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the governance of a global network of Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building, and to submit it to SC48 for subsequent submission to COP12.

### Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds to regional initiatives for activities in 2013

9. COP11 agreed through Resolution XI.5 (paragraph 12) 'to earmark financial support to regional initiatives in the Convention core budget for their activities during the period 2013-2015, provided that they are determined by the Standing Committee to fully meet the Operational Guidelines'.
10. COP11 decided 'that the levels of financial support to individual Regional Initiatives for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015 through that budget line will be determined by the Standing Committee during its annual meetings, based upon updated financial and work plans to be submitted in the required format not later than two months prior to its annual meetings, and with the benefit of the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance' (Resolution XI.5, paragraph 13).
11. COP11 also specified rules regarding eligibility for Ramsar core budget financial support: notably that this support 'will, in principle, only be provided for a period corresponding to the interval between two meetings of COP' (paragraph 15), 'that financial support for Ramsar Regional Centres that meet the Operational Guidelines can be obtained for a period of up to six years in total' (paragraph 16), and 'that Regional Initiative Networks that have already received financial support from the Convention's core budget for one triennium may have a three-year phasing out period, giving them the opportunity to find complementary means of financing their activities, and that financial support from the Convention's core budget will then cease' (paragraph 17).
12. The regional initiative for the Mediterranean (MedWet) has received funding support from the Ramsar budget during two consecutive periods between 2003 (COP8) and 2008 (COP10). The regional centres for the Western Hemisphere and for Central and West Asia, and the networks for the High Andean region and the West African coast, have received Ramsar financial support for two consecutive periods between 2006 (COP9) and 2012 (COP11). According to Resolution XI.5 (paragraphs 15-17), these five initiatives are thus no longer eligible for Ramsar core budget funding support.
13. Another seven regional initiatives have received Ramsar core budget start-up funding for one period between COP10 and COP11 (2009-2012). The regional centre for East Africa has received Ramsar funding for four years (2009-2012). Thus it is only eligible for additional Ramsar funding support for two years within the period 2013-2015 (Resolution XI.5, paragraphs 15 and 16). 2014 would therefore be the last year of Ramsar core budget funding support.
14. The networks for the Niger and La Plata river basins, for the Caribbean, for the Black and Azov Sea coastal wetlands, and for American mangroves and coral reefs, and the Carpathian initiative, have also received Ramsar funding during the period 2009-2012 between COP10 and COP11. 2014 is the second year of the three-year phasing-out period between COP11 and COP12 (Resolution XI.5, paragraph 17).
15. Table 1 on page 6 below provides the most relevant financial overview information for all Ramsar regional initiatives, based on the details provided in their annual reporting. The table shows in its columns, from left to right:
  - A) The total accumulated Ramsar funding (of CHF 1,753,592) provided to the initiatives from the specific Ramsar core budget line up to the end of 2012.
  - B) The subsequent allocations made by Standing Committee in 2013 from the Ramsar core budget line (totalling CHF 129,719).

- C) The total overall expenditure (Ramsar and non-Ramsar funds) reported by the initiatives during 2013 (totalling CHF 2,833,890).
- D) All funds (from Ramsar and other sources) currently available to the initiatives for their activities in 2014 (adding up to CHF 431,551).
- E) The planned expenditure for activities in 2014 (totalling CHF 5,091,261), to be covered by Ramsar and other funds.
- F) New additional funding requests from the initiatives, to be covered from the Ramsar core budget line for activities of the initiatives in 2014 (totalling CHF 171,700).
- G) The proposed allocations by Standing Committee to six eligible initiatives (totalling CHF 120,000) in accordance with maximum amount available in the Ramsar core budget line D.

The information provided in Table 1 shows that many of the regional initiatives are slow in disbursing funds allocated annually from the Ramsar core budget for activities planned to take place during the year in question, and that expenditure is often delayed and postponed to subsequent years. Thus, it is suggested Ramsar core budget funds for activities to take place during the current year are allocated taking into account left-over funds which are still available.

The initiative for the Black and Azov Sea coastal wetlands had almost its entire funding needs for 2014 available at the beginning of the year as funds had not been spent in 2013. Thus, no additional contribution from the Ramsar core budget is needed for 2014.

The requests from the eligible regional initiatives for additional Ramsar funding in 2014 amount to CHF 171,799. This is more than the CHF 120,000 allocated in the 2014 Ramsar core budget line D ('Support to regional initiative network and centres'). It is therefore suggested that the Standing Committee adapts its allocations to regional initiatives for their activities in 2014 to match the CHF 120,000 in core budget line D, as detailed in right-hand column (G) of Table 1 below.

Based on the decision by Standing Committee on how to allocate 2014 funds, the Secretariat will prepare individual contracts for the initiatives concerned, following the procedure already established by Standing Committee.

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**Table 1: Financial overview of regional initiatives**

all amount in CHF

0.9 CHF/USD

1.2 CHF/EUR

|                                | Past accumulated Ramsar funding (total up to and including 2012) | 2013 Ramsar funds disbursed | 2013 <sup>4</sup> TOTAL real expenditure | 2014 <sup>4</sup> TOTAL left-over available early in the year | 2014 <sup>4</sup> TOTAL planned expenditure | 2014 additional request of Ramsar funds | 2014 proposed allocation of Ramsar funds |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Regional centres for:</b>   | A  | B                           | C  | D   | E   | F                                       | G  |
| East Africa (Kampala)          | 176,357  | 35,000                      | 31,600                                   | 35,000  | 215,000                                     | 35,000                                  | <b>28,000</b>                            |
| Western Hemisphere (Panama)    | 223,286  | <i>nil</i>                  | 160,851                                  | 27,000  | 259,030                                     | <sup>2</sup> not eligible               |  |
| Central and West Asia (Ramsar) | 285,000  | <i>nil</i>                  | 941,698                                  | 13,500  | 939,000                                     | <sup>2</sup> not eligible               |  |
| East Asia (Changwon)           | <i>nil</i>   | <i>nil</i>                  | 395,000                                  | ?   | 425,000                                     | <i>nil</i>                              |  |
| <b>Regional networks for:</b>  |  |                             |  |   |   |   |  |
| West African coast             | 167,700  | <i>nil</i>                  | 18,837                                   | 226   | 59,500                                      | <sup>2</sup> not eligible               | <b>30,000</b>                            |
| Niger river basin              | <sup>1</sup> 60,000  | <sup>3</sup> 30,000         | 4,843                                    | 158   | 44,500                                      | 30,000                                  |  |
| High Andean                    | 143,000  | <i>nil</i>                  | 286,731                                  | <i>nil</i>  | 2,076,120                                   | <sup>2</sup> not eligible               |  |
| La Plata river basin           | 34,700   | 16,700                      | 25,297                                   | <i>nil</i>  | 232,000                                     | 16,000                                  |  |
| Caribbean                      | 43,800   | 15,000                      | 76,800                                   | <i>nil</i>  | 78,000                                      | 16,000                                  | <b>16,000</b>                            |
| American mangroves and reefs   | 102,000  | 20,000                      | 47,321                                   | <i>nil</i>  | 49,000                                      | 20,000                                  | <b>20,000</b>                            |
| East Asian-Australasian Flyway | <i>nil</i>   | <i>nil</i>                  | 472,080                                  | 278,720   | 531,440                                     | <i>nil</i>                              | <b>10,000</b>                            |
| Mediterranean                  | 310,930  | <i>nil</i>                  | 163,400                                  | -55,471   | ?   | <sup>2</sup> not eligible               |  |
| Carpathian                     | 120,560  | 13,019                      | 150,314                                  | 32,116  | 87,120                                      | 10,200                                  |  |
| Nordic-Baltic                  | <i>nil</i>   | <i>nil</i>                  | 51,409                                   | ?   | 49,751                                      | <i>nil</i>                              |  |
| Black and Azov Sea coast       | 86,259   | <i>nil</i>                  | 7,709                                    | 44,831  | 45,800                                      | 44,500                                  |  |
| <b>Totals</b>                  | <b>1,753,592</b>   | <b>129,719</b>              | <b>2,833,890</b>                         | <b>431,551</b>  | <b>5,091,261</b>                            | <b>171,700</b>                          | <b>120,000</b>                           |

<sup>1</sup> Ramsar funding (2011 and 2012) to benefit also the West African coast initiative<sup>2</sup> according to the provisions of paragraphs 15-17 of Resolution XI.5<sup>3</sup> 12,000CHF of 30,000CHF allocation not yet disbursed<sup>4</sup> TOTAL = Ramsar core budget funds plus funds from regional *sources*