

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

51<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 November 2015

SC51-12

## Proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives

### Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited:

- to note the advanced preparation of four additional Ramsar Regional Initiatives for wetland conservation and management in the Senegal and in the Amazon river basins, in Central Asia and in the Indo-Burma region;
- to endorse the proposals for four new Ramsar Regional Initiatives as having the potential to operate within the framework of the Convention during the triennium 2016-2018; and
- to request these future initiatives, if endorsed, to submit to the Secretariat, by 28 February 2016, an annual work and finance plan for 2016 (according to the format adopted by Standing Committee), in order to allow Standing Committee 52 to approve them, along with the other existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives, as operating within the framework of the Convention during the triennium 2016-2018.

### Introduction

1. Paragraph 5 of document SC51-11 on “Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention” states that new regional initiatives to be developed during the 2016-2018 triennium were invited to submit all relevant information on the specific form provided, on their objectives, work plan, governance structure and funding sources by 23 October 2015. Completed applications that were received are to be submitted to SC51 for possible endorsement, confirming that these initiatives will be operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during the triennium 2016-2018.

### Four proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiatives

2. The Secretariat has received four proposals for new regional initiatives. The forms can be consulted in English (Indo-Burma and Central Asia), French (Senegal river basin) and Spanish (Amazon basin) at:  
[http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ri\\_proposals\\_nov2015\\_efs\\_0.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ri_proposals_nov2015_efs_0.pdf).  
They are briefly summarized here:
  - A. Regional cooperation among the countries in the Senegal river basin (SenegalWet)**  
Proposed by the four countries sharing the Senegal river basin: *Guinea, Mali, Mauritania* and *Senegal*. The proponents intend to work closely with the intergovernmental office for the economic use of the Senegal river (*Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal OMVS*) and to establish a comparable governing structure among the four participating countries (Haut Commissariat). The initiative plans to address negative influences on the river wetlands and their biodiversity created through water management interventions leading to increased

desertification, population and land-use pressures. All four Ramsar Parties have submitted a formal letter of support to the proposed initiative.

**B. Regional cooperation for conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Amazon basin**

Proposed by *Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru* who are discussing the development of this initiative at regional level since 2012 (COP11). The initiative is intended to cover the Amazon river basin, an area that provides livelihoods to 34 million inhabitants, including 386 indigenous people, and stores about 10% of the earth's carbon and 20% of the world's river water resources. The proponents submitted a work plan and a financial forecast for 2016. Only Colombia has submitted so far a formal letter of support to the proposed initiative

**C. Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)**

Proposed by *Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam* who intend to work together on inland and coastal wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin. They anticipate to invite also the provinces of southern China and eastern India, who are part of the major river basins of the Indo-Burma region, to participate. The IUCN Asian Regional Office is managing a number of wetland-related projects in the region, anticipated to form part of the cooperation programme, and is providing support to the current development of this initiative (cf. as noted in Resolution XII.8.6). All five proponent Ramsar Parties have submitted formal letters of support to the proposed initiative.

**D. Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA)**

*Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan* have been discussing the development of a regional cooperation programme on wetland and water conservation and management at two regional workshops in 2015: first in Bishkek (April) and then in Dushanbe (November). The programme plans to focus on making inventories and improving access to data on wetlands at the regional level, the effective management of Ramsar Sites as well as other important wetlands in the region, enhancing awareness and knowledge about wetland values at all levels, and capacity building, project development and management. The second workshop developed a work plan and finance outlook for 2016. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have submitted formal letters of support to this initiative while Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have comments on the hosting of the desk of the initiative and so are unable to join the initiative at this time.

3. Based on this information, and taking into account additional information of ongoing preparatory activities in the regions concerned, the regional support teams at the Secretariat evaluated if these initiatives would meet the "Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands" (Decision SC46-28) on becoming operational in 2016. The Secretariat considers that these four initiatives have the potential to become operational in the short term and to provide effective support for improved implementation of the Ramsar Convention and the objectives of its Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
4. In order not to delay further preparatory activities of these initiatives, the Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee 51 endorses these four new Ramsar Regional Initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention, provided that they submit to the Secretariat, by 28 February 2016, an annual work and finance plan for 2016, according to the format adopted by Standing Committee.
5. This will allow Standing Committee 52 to endorse on an equal footing new Ramsar Regional Initiatives along with existing initiatives, as fully meeting the, by then revised Operational Guidelines 2016-2024 (to be adopted by SC52), based on a recent evaluation by the Secretariat.

### **Preliminary information on a possible additional initiative**

6. In addition to the above four proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives, the Secretariat has received preliminary information from Iraq, following its recent designation of the Central Marshes and Hammar Marsh for the Ramsar List, indicating that it wishes to develop a regional cooperation mechanism with the neighbouring Ramsar Parties in the Mesopotamian basin of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.