

Update on Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited to:

- **take note** of the annual reports received by the 15 ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives, published as received at: http://www.ramsar.org/library/field_date_period%253Avalue/2016/field_tag_body_event/ramsar-regional-initiatives-593;
- **take note** of the information papers SC52-Inf.Doc.04 providing an assessment of the ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and SC52- Inf.Doc.05 providing a common communications strategy for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives;

and to take the following two Decisions:

- **Standing Committee endorses** the ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives as complying with the Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 and operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2016-2018:
 - centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA),
 - centre for Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA),
 - centre for East Asia,
 - centre for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO),
 - network for the West African Coast (WacoWet),
 - network for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet),
 - network for the High Andean region,
 - network for the La Plata River Basin,
 - network for the Caribbean (CariWet),
 - network for [American] Mangroves and Reefs,
 - network for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway,
 - network for the Mediterranean (MedWet),
 - network for the Carpathian region,
 - network for the Nordic-Baltic region (NorBalWet),
 - network for the Black and Azov Sea Coasts (BlackSeaWet).
- **Standing Committee adopts** the revised Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention 2016-2024 that were submitted to SC52 by the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, after its concluding workshop on 12 June 2016.

Introduction

1. At COP7 in 1999, the Ramsar Contracting Parties first recognized regional cooperation as an effective way for them to promote and better implement the objectives of the Convention. 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: either through physically established *Ramsar Regional Centres* for regional training and capacity building, or through *Ramsar Regional Networks* that are set up to support regional cooperation.

2. Most recently at COP12 in 2015 (Resolution XII.8), the Parties recalled that Regional Initiatives are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern (paragraph 1), and reaffirmed the effectiveness of regional cooperation, through networks and centres (paragraph 8).
3. For the past triennium (2013-2015), the Standing Committee endorsed 15 Regional Initiatives (Decision SC46-13) as meeting the *Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands*, approved earlier by Standing Committee (Decision SC46-28). As requested by COP12 (Resolution XII.8, paragraph 11), all initiatives have submitted their annual report on progress with work in 2015 and a work plan for 2016 in the format approved by Standing Committee (Decision SC41-21). The reports are published in their original language (PDF) at: http://www.ramsar.org/library/field_date_period%253Avalue/2016/field_tag_body_event/ramsar-regional-initiatives-593.

Endorsement of Regional Initiatives for the triennium 2016-2018

4. COP12 in Resolution XII.8, paragraph 12 requested “the Standing Committee to continue to assess annually, based on the reports submitted, according to the format adopted through Standing Committee Decision SC41-21, the functioning of Ramsar regional initiatives in relation to the *Operational Guidelines*, the implementation of the Convention and the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, seeking support from the CEPA Oversight Panel as required”.
5. Based on the annual reports received, and information exchanged through regular contacts with the initiatives, the Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee endorse the following 15 ongoing Ramsar Regional Initiatives as continuing to comply with the Operational Guidelines and as operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2016-2018:

Four regional Ramsar centres:

- centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
- centre for Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA)
- centre for East Asia (RRC-EA)
- centre for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)

Eleven regional Ramsar networks:

- along the West African Coast (WacoWet)
- in the Niger River Basin (NigerWet)
- in the High Andean region
- in the La Plata River Basin
- in the Caribbean (CariWet)
- on [American] Mangroves and Reefs
- along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway
- in the Mediterranean (MedWet)
- in the Carpathian region (CWI)
- in the Nordic-Baltic region (NorBalWet)
- along the Black and Azov Sea Coasts (BlackSeaWet)

6. Some of them received initial start-up funding from the Ramsar core budget for a period of two consecutive triennia in between meetings of the Conference of the Parties. In accordance with the Operational Guidelines, none of them is any longer eligible to receive such start-up funds. None of those initiatives which had never asked for Ramsar core budget funding contributions requested such funding for their activities in 2016.

Operational Guidelines for the Regional Initiatives

7. COP12 instructed (through Resolution XII.8) “the Standing Committee to undertake a review of the *Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention*, as adopted for 2013-2015 through Standing Committee Decision SC46-28 and published on the Ramsar website, taking into account issues, among others, of governance, capacity, fundraising, and programmatic approach in alignment with the Ramsar Strategic Plan, and adopt the necessary amendments no later than the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee (SC52)” (paragraph 9), and approved “the validity and use of the *Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives*, as adopted for 2013-2015, for the period 2016-2018, until the amendments requested are adopted by the Standing Committee” (paragraph 10).
8. During the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee (SC51), some Contracting Parties expressed concern that new Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives were being prepared for adoption at SC52 before the assessment of existing Initiatives had been completed, and proposed the establishment of a working group to review the current Operational Guidelines and determine how best to produce revised Guidelines. It was also stated that the lack of clarity concerning the legal status of the Initiatives posed potential risks, and some Parties stated that any working group established to examine Operational Guidelines should look in particular at the legal status of Regional Initiatives.
9. These concerns led to Decision SC51-11: “The Standing Committee agreed to establish a new Working Group to examine the implications of the proposed new Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives and asked the Secretariat to support the setting up of this group.” The Parties also made Decision SC51-13: “The Standing Committee agreed that a one-day workshop to revise the Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives should be held immediately before SC52.”
10. In February 2016 the Secretariat invited the Parties and the leaders of the Regional Initiatives to indicate their interest to form part of such a Working Group. The membership of the Group is shown at Annex 1.
11. The work of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives includes an initial teleconference to agree on its terms of reference, work plan, timelines and the outputs to produce. The Group will work on the guidelines through electronic consultation with support from the Secretariat, and will finalize the text for proposed new Operational Guidelines during its workshop on 12 June 2016 at Gland. The final text will subsequently be submitted to SC52, for adoption during SC52, as requested in Resolution XII.8.

Assessment of the past achievements of Regional Initiatives

12. At COP12 (Resolution XII.8, paragraph 21), the Parties requested the Secretariat to assess the achievements of Regional Initiatives in delivering technical, administrative and collaborative benefits to the Parties in their region, as well as their effectiveness and efficiency, and to

analyse weaknesses, strengths and difficulties of Regional Initiative implementation and management.

13. To do so, the Secretariat sent in August 2015 a list of questions to the leaders of all Regional Initiatives in order to collect up-to-date information for the assessment of their achievements in an organized and comparable way. A draft assessment report was submitted to the first workshop of the leaders of the Regional Initiatives on 22 November 2015, and feedback was collected during the workshop.
14. Then, through Decision SC51-12, “The Standing Committee instructed the Secretariat to complete the assessment of existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives and to develop further the common communications strategy taking into account the comments made at the meeting.”
15. Thus, the Secretariat invited all Parties to provide additional comments to the draft assessment report in December 2015. The subsequently revised assessment report is available as information document SC52-Inf.Doc.04.

Common communications strategy for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

16. The Secretariat prepared an interactive session during the workshop on 22 November 2015 to analyse the communications needs of the Regional Initiatives. After the workshop, in line with Standing Committee Decision SC51-12 (see above), the Secretariat invited all Parties to respond to a specific questionnaire. Based on the feedback received, the key points for a common communication strategy for the Ramsar Regional Initiatives are available as information document SC52-Inf.Doc.05.

Annex 1

Membership of the Working Group on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives, May 2016

(showing Contracting Parties and Regional Initiatives represented)

Africa: 10 Parties represented (11 participants)

Mr Kossi Agbeti (Togo National Focal Point)

Mr Tanguy Assana (Central African Republic NFP)

Ms Ghania Bessah (Algeria, Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative/MedWet)

Mr Kawsu Jammeh (Gambia NFP, CEPA FP, new Senegal River Basin Initiative)

Mr Lamech Kaboré (Burkina Faso NFP, Niger River Basin Network/NigerWet)

Mr Abdou Khane (Senegal NFP, Chair Standing Committee Sub-Group on Finance, new Senegal River Basin Initiative)

Mr Djimasngar Mbaiti (Chad NFP)

Ms Volatiana Rahaniotriniaina (Madagascar NFP)

Mr Evariste Rufuguta (Burundi NFP, Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa/RAMCEA)

Mr Hervé Saboro (Central African Republic Mission in Geneva)

Mr Griffin Shanungu (Zambia NFP)

Asia and Oceania: 6 Parties represented (9 participants)

Mr Raphaël Glemet (IUCN, Secretary new Indo-Burma Initiative)

Ms Shirin Karryeva (Turkmenistan CEPA NGO FP, new Central Asia Initiative)

Mr Guanchun Lei (China, STRP member, Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia/RRC-EA, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership/EAAPF)

Mr Antonio Manila (Philippines)

Mr Spike Millington (Chief Executive EEAFF)

Mr Abdul Qaimkhani (Pakistan STRP FP)

Mr Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan (I. R. Iran, Coordinator Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia /RRC-CWA)

Mr Seung Oh Seo (Acting Executive Director RRC-EA)

Mr Brijesh Sikka (India STRP FP, CEPA FP)

Europe: 6 Parties represented (7 participants)

Mr Alexei Andreev (Republic of Moldova STRP FP, Black Sea Coastal Wetlands Initiative /BlackSeaWet)

Mr Grigore Baboianu (Romania, Coordinator BlackSeaWet, Carpathian Wetland Initiative/CWI)

Mr Delmar Blasco (Coordinator MedWet)

Mr Ján Kadlečík (Slovakia, Coordinator CWI)

Ms Jenny Lonnstad (Sweden NFP, CEPA FP, Chair Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative/NorBalWet)

Ms Olesya Petrovych (Ukraine CEPA FP, BlackSeaWet, CWI)

Ms Ekaterina Veselova (Russian Federation Administrative Authority, BlackSeaWet, NorBalWet)

Latin America and the Caribbean: 11 Parties represented (14 participants)

Ms Aixa Avendaño (Argentina, Coordinator Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands/HAW)

Mr Alvaro Baez (Bolivia, Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin)

Ms Laura Benzaquen (Argentina, Coordinator HAW)

Mr Hector Conde (Cuba, Coordinator Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative/CARIWET)

Mr Felipe Costa (Brazil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ms Dafne Dominguez (Guatemala)

Ms María Claudia García (Colombia NFP, new Amazon Basin Initiative)
Ms Kafi Gumbs (UK/Anguilla local contact)
Ms Georgina Mariona (El Salvador, Coordinator Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs)
Ms Juana Peña (Dominican Republic, Coordinator Mangroves and Coral Reefs)
Ms Zuleika Pinzon (Panama NFP, Coordinator Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere/CREHO)
Mr Walter Regueiro (Uruguay NFP, Coordinator La Plata River Basin)
Mr Gustavo Rey (Bolivia, La Plata River Basin)
Ms Claudine Sakimin (Suriname, Coordinator CARIWET)