

Proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited to:

- **take note** of the documentation received and the analysis undertaken by the Secretariat concerning the proposals for four new Ramsar Regional Initiatives;

and to take the following Decisions:

- **SC52 endorses** the proposed new Regional Initiatives for the Amazon Basin, Central Asia, the Indo-Burma region and the Senegal River Basin, as complying with the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives and as operating in the framework of the Convention during the period 2016-2018;
- **SC52 allocates funds** from the Ramsar core budget 2016 line D for Regional Initiatives to provide start-up funding to new Ramsar Regional Initiatives for their activities in 2016:
 - 25,000 CHF to the Amazon Basin Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Central Asian Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Indo-Burma Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Senegal River Basin Initiative, and
 - 20,000 CHF for costs of the workshop for Regional Initiatives (Gland, 12 June 2016).

Introduction and background

1. At the 51st meeting of Standing Committee in November 2015, the Secretariat introduced four proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives (Document SC51-12) and referred to the information submitted by them (which is on the Ramsar website at www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ri_proposals_nov2015_efs_0.pdf). The Secretariat suggested that these new initiatives should be invited to submit an annual work and finance plan for 2016, in order to allow Standing Committee to endorse them on an equal footing along with those of the existing initiatives, during its 52nd meeting.
2. Standing Committee felt that it would not be appropriate to endorse any proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiatives until it had had the opportunity to review all relevant documentation, and it suggested that Contracting Parties be invited to submit more complete documentation for the proposed new Regional Initiatives by February 2016 to allow these to be assessed at SC52.
3. Thus, through Decision SC51-14 "The Standing Committee agreed that proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiatives be invited to submit relevant documentation against a checklist of requirements to be provided by the Secretariat for consideration by SC52."

4. Subsequently, the Secretariat sent a note to the Parties that had proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiatives, asking them to provide i) additional information against a checklist provided of points that mirrored the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2013-2015 (adopted by Decision SC46-28), and ii) an annual work and finance plan for 2016 (according to the format adopted by Decision SC41-21).

Proposals for new Ramsar Regional Initiatives, their endorsement and start-up funding contributions

5. The proponents of the new regional initiatives had contacts with the Secretariat and provided detailed documentation and answers to the checklist of requirements. Their work and finance plans for 2016 are published, together with the annual plans of the existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives, here:
[www.ramsar.org/search?f\[0\]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&search_api_views_fulltext=](http://www.ramsar.org/search?f[0]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&search_api_views_fulltext=).
6. The information summarized below highlights the issues where individual initiatives are already well prepared, or still need to develop specific aspects further. It will be used as a checklist for further development of the initiatives during their start-up phase.
7. Based on the analysis of the comprehensive information received, the Secretariat considers that the Parties proposing the new initiatives have undertaken significant preparatory work to be able to start their operations in 2016, and that their proposals comply with the Operational Guidelines.
8. COP10 entrusted the Standing Committee to endorse new Regional Initiatives (Resolution X.6, paragraph 9). The Standing Committee is invited to endorse the new Regional Initiatives for the Amazon Basin, Central Asia, the Indo-Burma region, and the Senegal River Basin as operating in the framework of the Convention during the period 2016-2018 (according to Resolution XII.8 paragraph 11).
9. Based on the requests specified below and in their finance plans for 2016, the Standing Committee is invited to allocate the following sums from the Ramsar core budget line D for Regional Initiatives (120,000 CHF) to the new initiatives for their activities in 2016 (according to Resolution XII.8 paragraph 15):
 - 25,000 CHF to the Amazon Basin Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Central Asian Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Indo-Burma Initiative,
 - 25,000 CHF to the Senegal River Basin Initiative.In addition, it is suggested to allocate 20,000 CHF for the costs of the workshop of the Regional Initiatives (requested by SC51-13).

Documentation submitted by the proposed new Regional Initiatives against the checklist of requirements for Regional Initiatives

10. The points below reflect the checklist established according to the issues listed in the Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives. The text provides summaries of the questions that were submitted to the proponents of new Regional Initiatives (RI) in early 2016 and summaries of their answers provided. This allows also for easy comparison between the proposals.

A. *The aim of Ramsar's Regional Initiatives*

11. RIs as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan, and to raise the visibility of the Convention in the region:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Will act against further wetland loss and degradation in the basin, increase the area of under-represented wetland types, transboundary Ramsar Sites and support efficient management of Ramsar Sites, restoration of degraded wetlands and work for the wise use of all wetlands, notably also by addressing tourism, fisheries, energy, mining and agricultural aspects.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Promotes cooperation and synergies between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are considering to join. The RI allows its members to present themselves as one region, strengthen synergies in joint activities with other bodies, and to serve as a bridge between its members and between its members and the Ramsar Secretariat.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Supports engagement, cooperation and knowledge sharing, provides a regionally focused multi-stakeholder forum for establishing partnerships and improving wetland management, and supports research and dissemination of scientific information relating to drivers of wetland loss and degradation. The RI engages in advocacy, policy development and improving of capacity and awareness.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Supports the political implication of the four participating countries for wetland wise use, will make an assessment on what has already been achieved, and define gaps and new challenges to be addressed. This will be done through the elaboration of an operational road map and by using the structure of the existing intergovernmental network of the Office for the valorisation of the Senegal river valley (OMVS).
12. The geographical region and a list of the countries that will actively participate:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Covers a unique river basin with an exceptional hydrological, biological and cultural diversity facing significant threats through inappropriate land uses, mining, infrastructure development and water pollution. Initially Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil proposed the initiative in 2012, joined since also by Bolivia.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Focuses on existing and potential Ramsar Sites, on their ecosystem services, their contribution to biodiversity conservation, and their role in regional hydrological processes, notably in the Amu and Syr Darya transboundary river basins.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Will work on the territory of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam and on regional coordination to implement the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Comprises the Republic of Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, i.e. the river basin countries which are already cooperating in the framework of the OMVS, a high-level intergovernmental cooperation framework that will assure a lasting structure for the RI.

13. List of the letters of support received by national Ramsar Administrative Authorities and other partners:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Letters received from Colombia, and in preparation by the other four Ramsar Parties.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Letters received from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, as well as from WWF and IUCN. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan consider to join. The Regional Environment Center for Central Asia (CAREC) is willing to provide support, once all five countries join the initiative. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expressed interest to provide training in Japan. The three participating countries drew up a list of additional organisations to develop partnerships with.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Support letters received from all five Ramsar Parties. The Mekong River Commission and its national committees, UNDP and Ramsar's IOPs are anticipated to become potential partners.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Support letters received from all four participating countries Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.
14. How the RI will provide lasting structural and operational support for Ramsar implementation:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Will use existing cooperation agreements and networks, making use of already active cooperation programmes, such as the trinational protected areas corridor in the middle Putumayo river basin, or the GEF project for sustainable Amazonia landscapes. It will also work for improved Ramsar Site management and the designation of new Ramsar Sites.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Promotes stronger cooperation and synergies between countries through coordination and a platform for mutual communication, through the coordinated designation and management of Ramsar Sites, a common CEPA programme, including training and capacity building.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The strategic vision and work plan 2016-2018 will be developed in consultation with the Parties and key stakeholders for review and approval at an inception workshop in 2016 after the formal endorsement by SC52. The RI will promote the implementation of the Ramsar objectives, reinforce capacities, develop adaptive management of Ramsar Sites, transfer knowledge, and coordinate with other international initiatives.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will become a regional partnership platform for institutional actors, conservation NGOs and network organisations and profit from the advice and support by the Ramsar Secretariat. It will endeavour to work for poverty reduction through the promotion of Ramsar objectives, notably for the elaboration of national wetland policies, the increase of know-how and awareness and for wetland restoration.

B. Coordination between Regional Initiatives and the Secretariat

15. How effective coordination between the RI and the Ramsar Secretariat will operate:

- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Will establish a forum to discuss and agree on regional priorities for the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan, and establish regular contacts and exchanges with the Ramsar Secretariat.
- **Central Asian Initiative:** Through a coordination committee composed of the Ramsar National Focal Points and the Ramsar Secretariat. A technical secretary will be hired to serve the committee and assure the coordination with the Ramsar Secretariat.
- **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Two key governance bodies (steering committee and technical committee), each including a representative of the Ramsar Secretariat, coordinated by a regional secretariat that will be hosted by the IUCN Asia Regional Office. Also, a regional scientific and technical review panel will be created.
- **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** A coordinator and the High-Commissioner of OMVS will lead the initiative. Governance bodies will be established according to the model of the OMVS with rotating chairs. During the set-up period, Senegal will be in charge through its National Parks Directorate in coordination with the Water Planning and Management Directorate.

16. The specific role and responsibilities of the RI, in addition to the role of the Ramsar Secretariat:

- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Will provide a space for dialogue and the definition of common priorities and activities to benefit the entire basin for the participating countries, who will remain responsible for the implementation of their national priorities.
- **Central Asian Initiative:** By operating in English and Russian, the RI will close a communication gap between the Secretariat and the Parties, as well as between the Parties in the region. The RI will initiate and coordinate regional projects, such as wetland inventories, documentation of ecosystem services and raising wetland profiles in policy-making platforms.
- **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Will be a transboundary facilitation platform. The secretariat provides support to organise and undertake events and activities, produce regular communication, raise funds and ensure the timely delivery of work plans. Synergies with the existing water and wetlands programme of the IUCN regional office will be created, in close cooperation with the Ramsar National Focal Points, and with other existing RI in Asia (East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia).
- **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will provide lasting structural and operational support for Ramsar implementation in the four countries. It will establish its identity in line with the model of the OMVS and according to Ramsar rules.

17. Plans to develop an own identity, a specific logo (to be used in combination with the Ramsar logo) and to establish and regularly update a website for the RI:

- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Is developing its own logo and uses existing platforms for bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It will reinforce the Parks Network of protected areas.
- **Central Asian Initiative:** Planned development of a concept communications plan (including logo and website) in line with national priorities and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

- **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The partners in the RI will jointly develop a communications strategy and publicize the role of the RI in supporting the implementation of the Ramsar objectives.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will develop its logo (to be endorsed by the Ramsar Secretariat) and a website, to be located inside the Ramsar website.
18. Plans to develop, coordinate and run the RI. Advice and support expected from the Ramsar Secretariat, including the possible mobilization of additional resources:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Secretariat support to help setting up regional cooperation activities, know-how transfer, exchange of experiences, and capacity building for a better management of Amazon wetlands will be sought.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** The Secretariat is providing support for the development of terms of reference for the coordination committee and the technical secretary, to provide a solid framework for the operation of RIs, share best practices and lessons learnt among the RIs, and help with identifying donors and partner and fundraising.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Advice and support from the Secretariat during the initiation phase is highly desirable to develop terms of reference and a solid framework for operation, to share best practices and lessons to be learnt from other RI, and to identify and contact donors and partners, and for fund raising.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Hopes to receive technical and financial support from the Secretariat to develop a strategic action plan and annual work plans, rules of procedures, administrative and financial guidelines, and plans to increase capacities and to raise funds.
19. How the RI aligns its activities and operational targets with the objectives of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Will work for the sustainable management of the strategic ecosystems in the Amazon biome and the maintenance of their goods and services by focusing on all goals of the Strategic Plan, and notably on the targets 1, 2, 3, 6, 12 and 13.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Operational targets were identified in line with the Strategic Plan and will directly contribute to its implementation in Central Asia, by promoting stronger cooperation and synergies between the members of the RI.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The operational targets of the RI were identified in line with the Strategic Plan and will contribute to its successful implementation in the region.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Considers it essential that the four countries coordinate their efforts to implement the Strategic Plan and will work together to this end.
20. Mechanisms to assure coordination between the Parties and other members of the RI. Coordinating functions assigned to Parties or participating institutions on a rotating basis, and modalities to be reflected in a regional agreement:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** A technical secretariat will be established to coordinate the work, originally hosted by Colombia, and then rotating every two years among the participating countries.

- **Central Asian Initiative:** see below.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Ramsar Parties are represented by National Focal Points on the steering and technical committees. The technical committee includes also representatives from intergovernmental organisations, Ramsar IOPs and other organisations.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** The country chairing the high commission of the OMVS will coordinate the RI on a rotational basis. The high commission of the OMVS is located in Dakar, and Senegal will assure a permanent secretary for the RI, while the High Commissioner of OMVS and the chair of the RI will rotate.
21. Structure of the coordinating body or mechanism and its possible supervisory role of regional projects to be developed within the framework of the RI:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** The national Ramsar Administrative Authorities will guide the initiative and supervise its projects to assure quality control and communication and information of the Ramsar Secretariat.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** High priority for projects in 2016-2018 are important wetland sites (inventory, evaluation of ecosystem services, threats and opportunities). Lower priorities the evaluation of site management effectiveness, management plan development, restoration works, and the execution of projects for sustainable livelihoods and disaster and climate resilient communities. Followed by projects on awareness, CEPA, and wetland services and benefits.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The water and wetlands programme of the IUCN Asia Regional Office already prepared a number of relevant projects to form part of the RI, such as “Building resilience of wetlands in the lower Mekong region through a Ramsar Regional Initiative” and “Protected area solutions for biodiversity and climate change” (both funded by Germany), “Climate change adaptation in wetland areas in Lao PDR” (GEF), “Sustainable management of the lower Mekong wetlands (KfW), or “Community-led coastal management in the Gulf of Mottama, Myanmar (Switzerland).
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** The coordinator of the initiative and its permanent secretary will be in charge of the day-to-day administration of regional projects and programmes to be developed.
22. Plans to have dedicated professional staff involved in coordinating the operational aspects of the RI:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** The dedicated Ramsar persons in each of the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities will provide the most appropriate contributions to guarantee good quality results.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** A technical secretary responsible for facilitating the coordination of day to day activities in accordance with the terms of reference, agreed upon by the Ramsar National Focal Points of the member countries. Other professional staff will be hired on a needs basis when the RI raises funds for regional projects and starts to implement them.

- **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The secretariat will be hosted by the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok with two dedicated staff, pending receipt of appropriate core funding.
- **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** It is planned to have a chair for the governing body, a coordinator and a permanent secretary. Depending on needs, additional project managers and administrative and support staff can be hired.

C. *Governance of Initiatives*

23. Explanation of the mechanisms to provide coordination, guidance and insight, accepted in their role by the national administrations of the participating countries and other participating stakeholders:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Much emphasis will be put on using and further developing existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation approaches, as well as to reinforce the Park Network of protected areas. Technical support provided by Ramsar's IOPs will be developed into efficient tools for implementation.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** The main decision making body is the coordination committee with a chair elected from one of the country representatives on a three-year rotation basis. The technical secretary reports to the committee. The Ramsar National Focal Points will approve the terms of reference of the committee, its chair, and the technical secretary. International and regional partner organisations carry out projects according to established priorities and will be observers in the coordination committee.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The steering committee is composed of the five Ramsar NFPs, a representative of the Ramsar Secretariat, and the chair of the regional STRP. The committee is chaired by one of the Ramsar NFPs for a period of three years. The committee approves work plans, resolutions, documents and communication and meets annually. The technical committee assures that partners in the RI other than the Ramsar Parties are able to provide guidance. It is composed of representatives of Ramsar Parties and the Secretariat, delegates of the regional STRP, Mekong River Committees, IOPs, other international organisations (UNEP, FFI), local NGOs and academics. It leads the development of work plans, case studies and technical interventions, and reports to the decision-making steering committee. The regional STRP, composed of the national STRP focal points and additional experts, ensures peer review of draft materials and considers how best to disseminate them.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will develop a governing framework and rules of procedures through a consultation process during the first year and endorse it during a workshop.
24. Details about the legal structure of the governance body and its reception of key support from a host country, an International Organization Partner (IOP) of the Convention, or a host intergovernmental organization. How the governance body will be able to operate independently and be responsibly reporting to all members that constitute the RI (Contracting Parties and other members):
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** A technical secretariat initially to be hosted by Colombia, cf. above. Further details need to be developed.

- **Central Asian Initiative:** The technical secretary will be hosted by a suitable organization that works at the regional level in Central Asia. The Ramsar Secretariat will act as an interim facilitator of the initiative until the host organization is identified and the technical secretary is hired.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The IUCN Asia Regional Office will host and support the secretariat.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Key support will be provided by the OMVS and the National Parks Directorate of Senegal.
25. Progress and plans for 2016 to develop operational procedures, based on written, commonly agreed terms of reference, rules of procedure, or operational guidance:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Needs to be discussed and developed.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** The terms of reference will serve as a key document to establish the governance, consultation and coordination mechanism outlined above and to ensure equitable, effective and transparent mechanism of governance, consultation and coordination.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The partners in the RI will finalize and adopt during an inception workshop in early 2016 the terms of reference for the RI, its strategic vision and work plan 2016-2018. Minutes and proceedings of the governance bodies will be provided to the Ramsar Secretariat.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will elaborate rules of procedures and a specific manual for administrative and financial management.
26. The composition of the governance body, and planning and timetable to elaborate terms of reference (ToR), rules of procedure, or other written regulations for the governance and coordination of the RI:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** In process, needs to be developed.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** ToR for the coordination committee are under development. ToR for the technical secretary will be developed when the funding for the position is secured. The core functions of the secretary will be to facilitate information flow, support communication, promote good practices, carry out the work plan of the RI, and work with partner organisations.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** see above.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will specify these points during the first year of operating through a consultative process, cf. above.

D. Substantive elements of Initiatives

27. Explanation of the RI's bottom-up approach, to be supported by all Contracting Parties in the region:

- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** The individual countries will be driving the initiative and define together which activities are of regional interest. Thus the work of the initiative will be strongly supported by the countries.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** National needs and priorities will be brought forward to the coordination committee.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** National needs and priorities will be brought to the steering committee for discussion and adoption.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Is based on a bottom-up participative concept, encouraging the participating countries to take up leading roles on a rotational basis.
28. List of relevant stakeholders with an interest in and directly or indirectly responsible for wetland issues in the region, including the ministries responsible for environment and water issues, intergovernmental bodies, Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs), other NGOs, academia, local communities, and economic actors that will be participating, from the start, in your initiatives, besides the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Environment Ministries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil, WWF (Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia), WCS (Colombia-Ecuador-Peru-Brasil), Foundation Omacha, regional environmental authorities of Colombia, Amazon Research Institute (SINCHI) and Colombian National Parks, CorpoAmazonia, Sustainable Development Corporation for the NE Amazon (CDA).
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** see below.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** see above.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** OMVS and its national offices, Wetlands International Africa, Water management planning authority (DGPRE), University Gaston Berger St-Louis (UGB), and national conservation NGOs.
29. Plans to develop networks of collaboration to create an enabling environment for the involvement of all stakeholders at all levels in the region:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Cf. above, the initiative will work and further develop existing cooperation structures (trinational protected areas corridor, focus on specific Ramsar Sites, sustainable landscapes GEF project, park network SIRAP Northeast).
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Facilitate effective communication and information exchange, focus efforts on priority issues affecting wetlands, avoiding duplication of activities, and promote the adoption of decisions for effective management of Ramsar Sites by applying the best available approached and technologies.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Provides an overarching framework to link ongoing policy discussions, e.g. in the Mekong River Committee. The strategic vision and work plan of the RI will provide the needed coordination between ongoing and planned activities. The IUCN water and wetlands programme has working relationships with WWF, BirdLife and IWMI and the Ramsar Administrative Authorities. Memoranda of Cooperation will be established

with key organisations, and also other Ramsar RI in Asia (East Asia Centre, Flyway Partnership).

- **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** The website should serve as a platform for dialogue and dissemination of best practices and policies to be applied at river basin scale.
30. Plan to make optimal use of the Ramsar tools and to take into account strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions to become partners in the Initiative:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Main focus lies on targets 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan, and handbook 7 on participatory skills and policies.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Enhancing accessibility (translation into Russian), facilitate dissemination, promotion and integration of Ramsar tools into regional projects. The coordination committee with the technical secretary will be responsible for effectively applying the Ramsar tools. Regional resources and experiences will be documented and up-scaled to the global level in cooperation with the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Will coordinate the translation of the most relevant existing Ramsar tools into local languages and promote their use through increased training opportunities (e.g. on Ramsar METT) and a regional, web-based knowledge platform. The regional STRP will identify opportunities to apply Ramsar tools, to develop local resources and to support their upscaling for global use in cooperation with the Ramsar STRP.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will use and disseminate Ramsar tools that serve the Parties, IOPs and others for their wetland-related activities.
31. CEPA plans and specific activities to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar's objectives:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Need to be developed.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** A concept communications strategy will be developed to define how the Ramsar Convention and Secretariat are to be presented in all activities, projects, and publications and to ensure that the distinct identity of the RI is promoted and the profile of the Ramsar Convention increased. Translation into Russian and promotion of the Ramsar tools will increase Ramsar's visibility. If financial resources are made available, the RI will form a hub for carrying out workshops and coordination of projects and will actively facilitate cooperation and capacity building, also for other stakeholders working on wetlands.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** A communications strategy will be developed during the inception phase to define how the Convention and its objectives will be presented. All tools and publications of the RI will adhere to this strategy, to ensure that the distinct identity of the RI is maintained and the profile of the Convention increased. The RI will form a key hub for the organisation of workshops and coordination of Ramsar-related projects. Through the association with the IUCN water and wetlands programme, the RI will ensure that the Convention is associated with projects related to Ramsar Site management in the region. The RI will maintain a website to facilitate the dissemination of Ramsar tools.

- **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** With reference to the CEPA action plan of the Convention and the Strategic Plan, a specially adapted regional CEPA programme will be elaborated for implementation by the four countries sharing the Senegal river basin.
32. Plan to cooperate with and support the further work of STRP national focal points, members and experts:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Extensive cooperation with research institutions, universities, stakeholder groups in catchment basins and NGOs is planned to make use of the existing wetland-related expertise to create a good knowledge base for the region, and also to support the work of Ramsar's STRP.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** STRP national focal points will be represented in decision making processes and operations and involved regional projects.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The STRP national focal points and additional experts will create a regional STRP that will be an active part of the RI, see above.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Will use the outputs of the global working groups of STRP, notably those related to wetland management. It will also inform the global Ramsar structures about its regional considerations.

E. Financial and other support

33. List of the Parties who provide political support and of those that provide financial support, including other relevant partners in the region. Plan to reach equitably spread financial support by all parties to provide a stable financial base:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Political support provided by the Environment Ministries in the five countries, financial support will be sought from WWF, WCS, national environmental authorities, NGOs and research institutions in each country.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Will seek political support from the relevant Parties and organizations. Planned expenditures 2016-2018 are estimated around 7 million USD. Fundraising is anticipated from various sources, including the Ramsar core budget, countries participating in the Initiative, GEF, the World Bank, ADB, EBRD, EU, and USAID. Joint projects planned with IUCN, Wetlands International, UNDP, UNEP, Birdlife International, WWF, and GIZ.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The hydro-diplomacy programme of IUCN will be used to trigger additional political support beyond the Ramsar Administrative Authorities, with the National Mekong Committees, and others. The RI secretariat will be financially supported through overheads from the IUCN Asia Regional Office projects listed above (410,000 USD for 2016-2018), additional financial support from one or more Parties is anticipated, and an initial request for 60,000 USD start-up funding from the Ramsar core budget is requested for the inception workshop and follow up during the period 2016-2018.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Funding institutions and sources will be identified once the Ramsar Standing Committee will have endorsed the RI as operating in the framework of the Convention.

34. Host country or institutional support available to establish a coordinating office, plans to sign a hosting agreement:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** WWF Colombia is willing to host a coordination office and in a good position to allow it to work independently in a professional and effective way and in fundraising activities, with its own budget.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Discussions are being held to identify the host organization.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The IUCN Asia Regional Office will host the RI secretariat. A hosting agreement is in preparation in consultation with the Ramsar Parties.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** The administrative procedures of OMVS will serve as guidance. The OMVS and the National Parks Directorate of Senegal will host the offices of the RI and allow it to work independently. Until a high-level intergovernmental decision will provide the RI with a specific status, the National Parks Directorate bank account can be used, or a specific account opened within this organisation.
35. Funds already received, secured funding for planned work, activities and projects for an inception phase:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** The initiative aims to create sufficient support to become self-sustainable after a start-up phase of six years with Ramsar core budget support.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Discussions are being held with partners and donors to develop regional projects.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** For 2016, the budget needed is 125,000 USD of which IUCN already secured 30,000 USD from the German and Swiss projects listed above.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Preparatory discussions are ongoing, but can only be concluded, after the Ramsar Standing Committee will have formally endorsed the RI.
36. Start-up finance plan. If Ramsar funding is part of it, with a six year plan to show how such funding will be outphased to make the initiative self-sustaining:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** The operating budget for 2016 is 352,000 USD to be covered by the contributions from the participating countries (budgeted for 400,000 USD).
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Will apply for 30,000 USD from the Ramsar core budget for 2016 and seek to raise funds from various sources listed above.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Requests an annual Ramsar core budget contribution of 60,000 USD for 2016-2018.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** A Ramsar core budget allocation for the start-up phase is requested (2016: 85,000 CHF, 2017: 60,000 CHF, 2018: 35,000 CHF). Additional start-up support will be provided by the OMVS.
37. Operational readiness to receive and spend money, including Ramsar core budget support for the costs of activities occurring in 2016:

- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** They are in a position to receive Ramsar funding starting in 2016.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** The allocation from the Ramsar core budget will be managed by the Ramsar Secretariat until the host organization is identified and the technical secretary hired. The coordination committee will approve the budget and monitor expenditures.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** The IUCN Asia Regional Office is able to receive and spend money on behalf of the Ramsar RI.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** Can receive funds initially through the National Parks Directorate of Senegal.
38. Detailed plans to generate own resources and become financially self-sufficient after an initial start-up phase and in the long term:
- **Amazon Basin Initiative:** Aims to become self-sustained after a six-year initial phase.
 - **Central Asian Initiative:** Will raise funds from various sources including donor organizations and governments.
 - **Indo-Burma Initiative:** Will raise funds from various sources, including donor organisations and governments.
 - **Senegal River Basin Initiative:** A long-term financial strategy will be developed during the initial start-up phase with essential support by the Ramsar core budget and OMVS.