

Update for the Management Working Group on the re-recruitment of the Regional Officer – Oceania (RO-Oceania)

Actions requested:

The Management Working Group is invited to consider and provide advice to the Executive Team on:

- the re-recruitment of a Regional Officer for Oceania in light of the urgent need to fill the post which has been vacant since mid-2015; and
- the relocation of the position from SPREP in Samoa to the IUCN Oceania Regional Office in Fiji.

Summary

1. In 1996, Contracting Parties identified the value of providing greater technical and financial assistance to the Pacific island countries to support the conservation and wise use of their wetlands. In 2004 funds were found to hire an officer to support the Parties in the Oceania region, based at the offices of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in Samoa. In 2009, the position was renamed Ramsar Programme Officer – Oceania (RPO-O).
2. In 2015, under SPREP's rule that each staff position is re-advertised after six years, a re-recruitment exercise for the RPO-O was initiated by SPREP with the support of the Secretariat. During the re-recruitment exercise, it became clear that the cost of the position had increased due to inflation, and SPREP was not in a position to continue to cover the resulting deficit. The Secretariat decided to suspend the re-recruitment exercise pending a detailed review of the future funding and hosting of the position. *The position has currently been vacant since June 2015 and it is urgent that it is filled as soon as possible.*
3. The solution agreed with the Oceania Parties was for the position to move to the IUCN Oceania Regional Office (IUCN-ORO) in Fiji where costs are lower but there are still many opportunities for cooperation and synergies. The position would be renamed Regional Officer - Oceania.
4. Under Resolution XII.1 (para. 26), "...any requested changes to staff numbers or function group of staff [in the Secretariat] is to be discussed with the Executive Team for its concurrence". The Executive Team has asked the Secretariat to present the re-recruitment of this position to the Management Working Group for their consideration and comments.
5. *The Management Working Group is therefore invited to provide advice on the relocation of the Ramsar Regional Officer for the Oceania region from SPREP (Samoa) to IUCN-ORO (Fiji), and the re-recruitment for the vacant position. The terms of reference are attached at Annex 1.*

Background: The Regional Officer – Oceania 2004-2015

6. A priority for the Ramsar Convention has been to support the small island states and territories of the Oceania region to implement the Convention. One of the earliest attempts to achieve this was a workshop held in Papua New Guinea (1994), which discussed the wetland conservation and wise use priorities of a number of the Oceania countries. Recommendation 6.18 *Conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific Islands region*, approved at the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP6, Brisbane, 1996), urged Contracting Parties, international and regional organizations, and the Ramsar Secretariat to increase their technical and financial assistance to the Pacific island countries to support the conservation and wise use of their wetlands.
7. In 2004, funds were found to hire an officer to support the Parties in the Oceania region who was based at the offices of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in Samoa. Being posted in Oceania rather than at Ramsar Secretariat headquarters, this officer could respond more quickly and at a lower cost (in terms of travel) to requests for assistance from Parties. Over time, the officer established a regional presence for the Ramsar Convention and Parties valued the officer's assistance in supporting Ramsar implementation locally, building partnerships, raising the profile with governments and promoting new accessions.
8. In 2002, the Ramsar Secretariat and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (now called the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, SPREP) which is based in Samoa, developed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) and associated Joint Work Plan 2002-2003 (JWP). The MoC was signed at the Second Ramsar Regional Meeting (Samoa, 2002) and the JWP finalized in June 2002.
9. In 2004, a grant of CHF 85,000 was provided by the Government of Australia with additional funding from Swedish SIDA and WWF International to hire an Assistant Advisor – Asia / Oceania for 18 months. This amount was to cover the salary, travel and operating expenses for the post. It was decided that the officer should be based at the SPREP offices in order to establish a regional presence for the Ramsar Convention. Being out-posted would also allow the officer to respond more quickly and at a lower cost (in terms of travel) to provide assistance with new accessions, as well as follow up and ongoing support and advice to Parties for the implementation of the Convention. SPREP was contracted to use the grant to cover the cost of the position. The officer would work "...closely with SPREP's Wetlands Management Officer..." and also "...seek advice and support from the Senior Advisor (Asia), the Deputy Secretary General and the Secretary General".
10. In 2006, the Ramsar Secretariat and SPREP renewed their MoC, as well as for the Assistant Advisor – Asia / Oceania, for a further three years. In the same year, the position became funded by the Ramsar Convention's Core Budget (Res IX.12 *Financial and budgetary matters*).
11. In 2009, the position was renamed Ramsar Programme Officer – Oceania (RPO-O) and the MoC between Ramsar and SPREP was renewed for a further three years. The MoC was renewed again in 2012 and lasted until December 2015.

2015: Re-recruitment process

12. Under SPREP's employment conditions, each staff position is re-advertised after the incumbent has held the position for six years. As the contract for the Ramsar Programme Officer – Oceania

(RPO-O) was to expire in February 2015, a re-recruitment exercise for the RPO-O was initiated by SPREP in January 2015 with the support of the Secretariat.

13. During the recruitment exercise, the Secretariat and SPREP discussed the cost of the RPO-O position; from 2004 until 2015, the amount provided by the Convention to cover the cost of the position had remained the same, at USD 85,000 per year. However, the actual cost of the position had increased to some USD 130,000 per year due to inflation, and the SPREP policy on salary increases for staff. Whilst SPREP had generously been able to cover the deficit until then, they were not in a position to continue to do so.
14. Concerned about the financial sustainability of the position, the Secretariat decided to suspend the re-recruitment exercise in April 2015, pending a detailed review of the future funding and hosting of the position.
15. Since that time, the Secretariat has held numerous discussions with the Oceania Contracting Parties, SPREP and IUCN about possible options on how to maintain an effective Ramsar position in the region. The eventual solution agreed with the Oceania Parties was for the position to move from SPREP in Samoa to the IUCN Oceania Regional Office (IUCN-ORO) in Fiji, where costs are lower but there are still many opportunities for cooperation and synergies with the IUCN-ORO regional team. Locating the position in the IUCN-ORO would also simplify the administration of the position and the reporting lines. The position would be renamed Regional Officer - Oceania.

Annex 1 Terms of Reference, Regional Officer – Oceania

Vacancy #:	xxxx
Unit:	Asia-Oceania Regional Team
Organization:	Secretariat, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
Location:	IUCN Oceania Regional Office, Suva, Fiji
Reporting to:	Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania
Work percentage:	100%
Function group:	P2
Expected start date:	
Type of contract:	Fixed-term (24 months)
Closing date:	

BACKGROUND

The Convention on Wetlands, also called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The treaty, adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971, embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance, to ensure the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories, and to cooperate with neighbouring countries for the conservation of shared wetlands and their biodiversity.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat, hosted by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, provides the secretariat services to the Convention's Contracting Parties (signatory countries) for the operations and implementation of the Convention. Among the Secretariat staff of 23 persons, four regional teams provide specific support to the Ramsar Contracting Parties in Africa, the Americas, Asia/Oceania and Europe. Each of the regional teams is made up of a Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) and an Intern/Assistant. The Africa and Oceania regions each have an additional Regional Officer but the latter is out-posted in the Oceania region and reports to the SRA for Asia-Oceania who is based in the Secretariat headquarters.

Ramsar Contracting Parties in the Oceania region are presently Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The main focus of the Regional Officer - Oceania will be to strengthen the capacity of the Asia-Oceania regional team to support the Contracting Parties and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its 4th Strategic Plan at the national and regional levels in the Oceania region.

He/she will contribute to the work of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat by following the agreed annual workplan and communicating and reporting regularly to the SRA for Asia-Oceania.

The responsibilities of this position include:

Direct support to Oceania Parties to implement the Convention

- Working with Oceania Contracting Parties and partners, such as IUCN Oceania Regional Office (IUCN ORO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other regional organizations, to develop funding proposals for projects that would support the implementation of the Convention in the region;
- Strengthening communication with Oceania Contracting Parties and networking with national NGOs and international partner organizations and other relevant bodies in Oceania, so as to provide a stronger voice on wetland issues affecting the region;
- Advising Contracting Parties on the conservation and wise use of existing Ramsar Sites in Oceania including assisting with site documentation and the identification and designation of new Ramsar Sites;

- Maintaining regular contacts with, and providing information to non-Contracting Parties concerning the Ramsar Convention, so as to encourage and support their accession to the Convention;
- Supporting use of the guidelines, tools and mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of wetlands that have been developed under the Convention, and the development of new mechanisms and tools;
- In consultation with the Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania, support opportunities for cooperation between Ramsar Parties in Oceania and Asia, for example Coral Triangle Initiative and International Partnership for Blue Carbon;
- Maintaining effective communication between Oceania Parties and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat by bringing their views, experiences and needs regarding the implementation of the Convention to the attention of the Secretariat and especially the SRA for Asia-Oceania.

Direct support to Ramsar Convention Secretariat administering implementing of the Convention in Oceania

- Conducting activities related to spreading the 'Ramsar message' to governments, decision-makers, the media, the private sector, and the general public (e.g. World Wetlands Day) and participating in other events, delivering presentations where appropriate;
- Contributing to the organization and implementation of relevant meetings of the Convention, e.g. the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) and regional Pre-COP meetings;
- Dealing with the conservation and sustainable use issues of Ramsar and other priority wetland sites and particularly assisting with the procedure concerning adverse changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites through the Article 2.5, Article 3.2 and Montreux Record mechanisms.

The above job description contains the main duties and responsibilities for this position. However, in a small Secretariat such as Ramsar, staff members are expected to show flexibility in their approach to work and be willing to undertake other tasks that are reasonably allocated to them but which are not part of their regular job description. Where any task becomes a regular part of an employee's responsibilities, the job description will be changed in consultation with the employee and the Human Resources Management Group.

REQUIREMENTS

- At least 8 years work experience in the social, economic and environmental aspects of wetlands conservation, preferably within the Oceania region;
- Knowledge and understanding of international conventions, preferably the Ramsar Convention, its work in the Oceania region, and its linkages with the other environmental conventions;
- Demonstrated experience in participatory methods of programme and project development, fundraising, project management and implementation, including monitoring and evaluation, financial management, grant proposal and report writing;
- Fluency in English with excellent written and verbal communication skills including high level of presentation and inter-personal skills, with proven ability to synthesize information and communicate effectively to multiple audiences at all levels especially in the Oceania region;
- Demonstrated advisory and analytical skills including high level of planning, priority setting, organizational, coordination, analytical, problem-solving and facilitation skills, and time management;
- Ability to work independently and remotely with willingness to travel widely in order to carry out the workplan
- Demonstrated ability to work within a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural team environment with sound experience in establishing and maintaining effective relationships with a diverse group of people including different levels of government, NGOs and community groups;
- Have a flexible approach to work, an ability to collaborate and to work across programmes.