

## Update for the Management Working Group on the Recruitment of a Regional Officer – Asia (RO-Asia)

### Actions requested:

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

- the recruitment of a Regional Officer for the Asia region; and
- the raising of non-core funds from voluntary contributions for the position.

### Summary

1. In order that the Asia Team can provide more effective support for the Parties in the region, the Secretariat requests the establishment of a Regional Officer – Asia (RO-Asia) position and for the Secretariat to begin raising non-core funds through voluntary contributions to cover the costs of the position.
2. This request follows on from the 51<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (SC51), where Asian Contracting Parties expressed the desirability of establishing such a position and of seeking non-core voluntary contributions to fund it.
3. 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 now requested the Secretariat to present the recruitment of this position to the Management Working Group for their consideration and comments.
4. It is proposed that the RO-Asia be out-posted in Asia and that the Secretariat seek a suitable host organization in the region. This would be similar to the out-posting of the RO-Oceania at the IUCN Oceania Regional Office in Fiji. The benefits of out-posting are that the officer can more quickly respond to the needs of the Parties in the region, the costs would be lower than if the person was based in Gland (Switzerland), with respect to both salary, overheads and travel, and that there would be more opportunities to work with regional partners and donors to support the Parties.
5. However, the challenges would include maintaining an effective channel of communication between the Secretariat and the out-posted Regional Officer – Asia. This would be overcome by the Officer having a clear annual and monthly work plan developed in consultation with the Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania in the Ramsar Secretariat. In addition, apart from communicating electronically and by telephone as needed, the Officer would provide monthly written reports to the SRA for Asia-Oceania.
6. The role of the proposed Regional Officer – Asia is outlined in the annexed terms of reference (Annex 1).

## Background and rationale

7. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was adopted in 1971 and has grown to have 169 Contracting Parties worldwide who between them have so far designated over 2,200 Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar Sites"). The Parties are served by a Secretariat with 23 staff which has been hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1971.
8. In 1991, Kushiro City in Japan seconded a staff member to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat to work as the Technical Officer for Asia in the run-up to COP5, which was held in the city in 1993. This position developed into the Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) for the Asia and Oceania regions, and other Senior Regional Advisors were then hired to support the Parties in the other regions. There is currently one SRA for Africa, one for Asia and Oceania, one for Europe, and one for Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.
9. In 1997, the Intern/Assistant Advisor programme was initiated so that each regional team then had one SRA and one Intern/Assistant under the internship programme (with a maximum term of two years) to support the growing number of Parties acceding to the Convention.
10. With the increase in the number of Contracting Parties and in the support that regional teams in the Secretariat need to provide for implementation (including on Ramsar Sites that are being designated and for those Sites whose Ramsar Information Sheets are being updated), it was recognized that there was a need to increase the number of staff in the Secretariat's regional team in order to ensure that effective support can continue to be provided to the Parties. This matter was discussed during the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP11) in 2012 (Resolution XI.2, Annex III) and the costs of additional Regional Officers were included in the non-core budget for the triennium 2013-2015.
11. As of 2016, additional staff support for the regional teams has been funded under the core budget for two regions, namely Africa (approved in COP12) and Oceania (approved in COP9), but not for the remaining regions, i.e. Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.
12. During the 51<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee (SC51), the Republic of Korea made a statement in plenary underlining "*...the desirability of establishing a Regional Officer for Asia, noting that several Asian Contracting Parties had expressed interest in supporting such an officer through voluntary contributions*" (SC51 Report and Decisions, para. 106).
13. In the Asia region, the number of Parties has increased to 33 (as of April 2016), and the number of Ramsar Sites to 310. These are increases of 154% and 377% respectively since 1997, when the Intern/Assistant Advisor for Asia-Oceania programme began. In the coming year, it is expected that demand for technical support from Asian Contracting Parties will continue to increase, due to:
  - The interest of a number of Asian countries in acceding to the Convention, e.g. Afghanistan, Brunei, Maldives, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Singapore;
  - An increase in the number of requests, including for technical and funding support in the designation and management of Ramsar Sites, and training on various aspects of the implementation of the Convention;
  - The increasing interest from Parties to develop Ramsar Regional Initiatives, e.g. for Central Asia, Indo-Burma, and South Asia, and to provide funding and technical support to those initiatives; and

- The need to provide support to regions where implementation of the Convention has so far been slower, e.g. Central Asia and West Asia.

## Annex 1 Terms of Reference, Regional Officer – Asia

<b>Vacancy #:</b>	xxxx
<b>Unit:</b>	Asia-Oceania Regional Team (Secretariat, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands)
<b>Organization:</b>	Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
<b>Location:</b>	<i>To be determined</i>
<b>Reporting to:</b>	Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania (Secretariat, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands)
<b>Work percentage:</b>	100% Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
<b>Function group:</b>	P1
<b>Expected start date:</b>	
<b>Type of contract:</b>	Fixed-term (24 months)
<b>Closing date:</b>	

### BACKGROUND

The Convention on Wetlands ('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 ('Ramsar Sites'), 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. Currently, the Convention has 169 Parties of which 33 are in the Asia region. Within the Secretariat, regional teams provide support to the Parties in specific regions of the world. Each of the regional teams is made up of a Senior Regional Advisor and an Intern/Assistant. The Africa and Oceania regions each have an additional Regional Officer with the latter being out-posted in the Oceania region and reports to the Senior Regional Officer for Asia-Oceania based in Gland.

### SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Regional Officer – Asia will be responsible for supporting the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Asia region through coordinating the activities related to the Convention conducted by the Asia-Oceania Team within the Ramsar Secretariat. The Officer will work under and report to the Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania (Ramsar Secretariat). The position's responsibilities would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

#### Direct support to Asian Contracting Parties to implement the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- Supporting Asian Contracting Parties to implement the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, as well as the relevant Resolutions of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP);
- Working with Asian Contracting Parties, partners and other regional organizations, to develop and submit funding proposals for key wetland and Ramsar-related initiatives in the region, including regional initiatives;
- Providing technical support to Asian Parties, Ramsar partners, project managers to implement the Ramsar Convention through the provision of trainings, guidance in report drafting, and support for Ramsar Site designation as well as their conservation and wise use;
- Supporting use of the mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of wetlands that have been developed under the Convention, and the development of new mechanisms and tools, such as the R-METT (ResXII.15);
- Strengthening communication and networking with Asian Contracting Parties and international partner organizations and other relevant bodies in Asia, so as to share information of and mainstream wetland issues in the region;

- Maintaining effective communication between Asian Parties and the Secretariat by bringing their views, experiences and needs regarding the implementation of the Convention to the attention of the Secretariat.

#### Direct support to the Ramsar Secretariat in administering the implementation of the Ramsar Convention

- Contributing to implementing the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024, by communicating its objectives and targets to governments, decision-makers, the media, the private sector, and the general public (e.g. World Wetlands Day) and participating in other events where appropriate;
- Contribute to the organization and implementation of relevant meetings of the Convention, e.g. the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) and Pre-COP meetings;
- Conducting regular follow-up on all Ramsar Sites on Article 3.2, Article 2.5 and Montreux Records;
- 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;
- Participating in the work of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat through frequent long-distance communication and monthly reporting to the Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

---

- Master's degree or higher in environment sciences, natural resource management, wetland management, or a related field;
- Minimum 5 years of experience in related positions (natural resource management, wetlands, Ramsar Convention), preferably within the Asia region;
- Comprehensive knowledge of wetland management issues and institutional networks in the Asian region (including government agencies, CSOs, the private sector and the donor community);
- Knowledge of the workings of international biodiversity related conventions, in particular the Ramsar Convention across Asia and in the Mekong Region particularly, and its linkages with the other biodiversity conventions. A knowledge of the Ramsar Secretariat processes would be an advantage;
- 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 especially in the Asia region. Knowledge of an additional Asian language would be an advantage;
- Capacity to work autonomously and to take initiative;
- Demonstrated advisory and analytical skills including high level of planning, priority setting, organizational, coordination, analytical, problem-solving and facilitation skills, and time management;
- 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;
- Strong writing skills and a capacity to draft reports independently and to disseminate project outputs to a broad audience in the region.