

Update on Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the progress reports submitted by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention during the triennium 2016-2018 with the endorsement of the Standing Committee through Decisions SC52-17 and SC52-20;
- ii. allocate funds from the Ramsar core budget 2017 (Resolution XII.1) line D for Regional Initiatives to provide start-up funding to newly established Ramsar Regional Initiatives for their activities in 2017:
 - 30,000 CHF to the Senegal River Basin Initiative,
 - 30,000 CHF to the Amazon River Basin Initiative,
 - 30,000 CHF to the Central Asian Initiative, and
 - 30,000 CHF to the Indo-Burma Initiative.

Background

1. The Ramsar Contracting Parties first recognized regional cooperation as an effective way for them to promote and better implement the objectives of the Convention at COP7 in 1999 (Resolution VII.19). This triggered the establishment and development of formally established regional cooperation mechanisms, referred to as “Ramsar Regional Initiatives” (RRIs).
2. COP12 in 2015 (Resolution XII.8) recalled that RRIs “which include centres for training and capacity building and networks which facilitate cooperation, are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographic regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern” (paragraph 1).
3. Subsequently the Standing Committee (Decision SC52-17) approved 15 ongoing RRIs as functional within the framework of the Convention for the period 2016-2018:
 - Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RCC-EA);
 - West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WaCoWet);
 - Niger River Basin Network (NigerWet);

- Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands;
 - Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of River Wetlands in the La Plata Basin,
 - Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative (CariWet);
 - Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs;
 - East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership;
 - Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet);
 - Carpathian Wetlands Initiative (CWI);
 - Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet); and
 - Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).
4. The Standing Committee (Decision SC52-20) endorsed four new RRIs as functional within the framework of the Convention for the period 2016-2018 and approved start-up financial support from the Ramsar core budget of CHF 30,000 to each of them for their activities in 2016. These new RRIs are the:
- Senegal River Basin Initiative;
 - Amazon River Basin Initiative;
 - Central Asia Initiative; and
 - Indo-Burma Initiative.

Progress with work by the 19 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2016

5. COP12 (Resolution XII.8) 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” (paragraph 12).
6. The Secretariat maintains regular contacts with each of the RRIs through its senior regional advisers to ensure that the objectives and work programmes of the RRIs are in alignment with the Convention’s Strategic Plan, and that the Operational Guidelines for RRIs are applied through the different regions, as stipulated in chapter 5 of the Operational Guidelines for RRIs to support the implementation of the Convention.
7. The coordinators of RRIs were requested to use the annual reporting format available on the Ramsar website (Document SC41-13 Annex I, www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-regional-initiatives) and to send their concise report of progress with work in 2016 and planned work for 2017, including a financial overview, to the Secretariat by 31 January 2017. These reports are available here: [www.ramsar.org/search?f\[0\]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f\[1\]=field_sort_date%3A2017&se arch api views fulltext](http://www.ramsar.org/search?f[0]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f[1]=field_sort_date%3A2017&se arch api views fulltext).

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2017

8. COP12 (Resolution XII.8) included “financial support in the Convention core budget line ‘Support to Regional Initiatives’, as listed in Resolution XII.1 on financial and budgetary matters, to support running costs of operational regional initiatives during the period 2016-2018 which fully meet the Operational Guidelines” (paragraph 14).

9. COP12 further decided “that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to individual regional initiatives for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 will be determined annually by the Standing Committee, based on the most recent reports and updated work plans to be submitted according to the required format and timetable, and informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance” (paragraph 15).
10. As outlined in chapter 7 of the “Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention” (adopted with Decision SC52-16), the Standing Committee approved an allocation of 30,000 CHF to each of the four new RRI (see paragraph 4) for their operations in 2016 (Decision SC52-20).
11. These four eligible RRI submitted, as part of their financial reports and work plans for 2017, new requests for Ramsar core budget support for their operations in 2017, as detailed in the table below:

Ramsar Regional Initiative	Carried forward for activities in 2017 (all in CHF)	Total budget for activities in 2017	Requested Ramsar core budget 2017 contribution	Proposed Ramsar core budget 2017 allocation
Senegal Basin	12,195	99,000	60,000	30,000
Amazon Basin	30,000	60,000	30,000	30,000
Central Asia	26,004	93,104	30,000	30,000
Indo-Burma	23,126	83,126	30,000	30,000
Ramsar budget line D				120,000

12. Based on these requests, and taking into account the available core budget allocation for 2017 (Resolution XII.1, Annex I, budget line D) of 120,000 CHF, the Standing Committee at its 53rd meeting is invited to allocate 30,000 CHF to each of the four RRI listed above for the cost of their activities in 2017, as listed in their work plans.