

Ramsar Regional Initiatives Update for 2018

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 2018 line D for Regional Initiatives (Resolution XII.1) to provide start-up funding to newly established Ramsar Regional Initiatives for their activities in 2018, as follows:
 - CHF 30,000 to the Senegal River Basin Initiative;
 - CHF 30,000 to the Amazon River Basin Initiative;
 - CHF 30,000 to the Central Asian Initiative; and
 - CHF 30,000 to the Indo-Burma Initiative; and
- iii) instruct the Secretariat to finalize contractual funding agreements rapidly with these four Ramsar Regional Initiatives, to allow smooth progress with the implementation of their 2018 work plans.

Background

1. At its seventh meeting (San Jose, 1999), in Resolution VII.19 on *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention*, the Conference of the Contracting Parties recognized regional cooperation as an effective way to promote and better implement the objectives of the Convention. This triggered the establishment and development of a formally established regional cooperation mechanism, referred to as Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs).
2. At the 12th meeting (COP12, Punta del Este, 2015), in Resolution XII.8 on *Regional Initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*, in paragraph 1, the Conference 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”.
3. Subsequently, at its 52nd meeting, the Standing Committee approved the following 15 RRIs as operating within the framework of the Convention for the period 2016-2018 (Decision SC52-17):
 - 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 Wetland Initiative (CWI);
 - Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet); and
 - Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).
4. The Standing Committee also endorsed four new RRI as operating 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 (Decision SC52-20), and the same amount for their activities in 2017 (Decision SC53-09). These new RRI are:
- Senegal River Basin Initiative;
 - Amazon Basin Initiative;
 - Central Asia Initiative; and
 - Indo-Burma Initiative.

Progress with work by the 19 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2017

5. At COP12, in Resolution XII.8, paragraph 12, the Conference of the Parties 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”.
6. The Secretariat maintains regular contacts with each of the RRI to help ensure that their objectives and work programmes are in alignment with the Convention’s Strategic Plan, and that the Operational Guidelines for RRI are applied.
7. The coordinators of RRI were requested to use the annual reporting format available on the Ramsar website (Document SC41-13 Annex I, <http://www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-regional-initiatives>) and to send their concise report of progress with work in 2017 and planned work for 2018, including a financial overview, to the Secretariat by 15 January 2018. These reports are available at the following url:
[https://www.ramsar.org/search?f\[0\]=type%3Adocument&f\[1\]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f\[2\]=field_sort_date%3A2018&search_api_views_fulltext=.](https://www.ramsar.org/search?f[0]=type%3Adocument&f[1]=field_tag_body_event%3A593&f[2]=field_sort_date%3A2018&search_api_views_fulltext=)

Summary of the operations and success of the RRI operating during the period 2016-2018

8. Also at COP12, in paragraph 24 of Resolution XII.8, the Conference of the Parties requested “the Standing Committee to prepare a summary of its annual assessments, which reviews the

operations and success of the regional initiatives operating during the period 2016-2018, for Contracting Parties' consideration at the 13th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties".

9. Table 1 contains a summary of information provided in the annual work plans referred to in paragraph 7 above, focusing on the operations, listing meetings of governing bodies and members, and focusing on success, listing documents produced, results achieved and ongoing activities of the 19 RRI's that are operating during the period 2016-2018:

Table 1: Summary of information in annual work plans

Ramsar Regional Initiative	Operations (governance meetings held)	Success (activities, products and results achieved)
Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)	-	- publication of wetland assessment tool, update of 11 Ramsar Site Information Sheets and maps for Uganda; - preparation of best practices re. three Ramsar Sites; - collection of information on education centres and for a wetland policy brief; - development of a concept for Ramsar Site twinning
Centre for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)	Annual meetings of the board of directors held in 2016 and 2017	- work plan agreed; - meetings and agreements signed with partners; - several workshops and training courses held; - different projects on biological characterization of shark fishing bay and research.
Centre for Central and West Asia (RRC-RWA)	-	Co-organized a RAM to the Mesopotamian Marshes
Centre for East Asia (RRC-EA)	Steering Committee meeting	- organization and conduct of different workshops, training sessions, seminars, conferences, etc.; - financing of four projects through the RRC-EA Wetland Fund; - communications on WWD, through the website, Wetland Link International network, guidebooks, etc.; - development of a draft resolution for COP13 on rapid assessment of wetland ecosystem services
West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WaCoWet)	-	- participation in regional fora and conferences
Niger River Basin (NigerWet)	-	- workshop on Inner Niger Delta Ramsar Site; - data collection on wetlands in the river basin
Conservation and sustainable use of High Andean wetlands	Annual meetings of coordination committee in 2016 and 2017.	- preparation of a regional GEF project to be implemented by FAO; - work to reinforce High Andean Wetland Site Network based on the distribution of two species of flamingos.
Conservation and wise use of wetlands in the La Plata Basin	Coordination Committee meeting held in 2016	- consolidation of a wetland actors' map; - preparation of wetland inventory and management effectiveness projects; - preparation of a cooperation agreement with the Basin Commission (CIC Plata); - participation in SC Working Group on RRI's; - approved project to strength the capacities of site managers of Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Ramsar Regional Initiative	Operations (governance meetings held)	Success (activities, products and results achieved)
Caribbean Wetlands Initiative (CariWet)	Coordination Committee meetings held in 2016 and 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparation of a map of regional and national actors; - preparation of a brochure and a video to raise the visibility of the Convention and the initiative; - preparation of 2nd stage of IKI project proposal; - preparation of Ramsar Site case studies
Conservation and wise use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs	Coordination Committee meetings held in 2016 and 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparation and submission of regional project proposals; - preparation of video to be presented in the Americas pre-COP regional meeting; - financial forward planning
East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)	Meeting of the Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adoption of Action Plan and CEPA Strategy; - site managers training course in China; - work on new Flyway Network Sites database, single species action plans and other subjects; - side events at CMS COP12 and Asian Wetland Symposium
Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet)	Steering Group and Friends of the Chair meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishment of the Scientific and Technical Network; - preparation of the "Mediterranean Wetland Outlook"; - training course on visitor management; - strategical planning meeting; - participation in ongoing and preparation of new EU projects; - communications programme, also in synergy with MAVA Foundation projects
Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - testing of database and map of Carpathian wetlands; - participation in the work of 5 Thematic Platforms, in cooperation with the Carpathian Convention, Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, and others; - preparation of several project proposals; - participation in SC Working Group on RRI
Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)	Coordination Committee meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workshop on ecosystem services; - dissemination of the results of the peatland project in 16 languages; - participation in SC Working Group on RRI, in STRP and in CEPA Oversight Panel
Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation in SC Working Group on RRI
Senegal Basin Initiative	Governance Unit meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elaboration of draft strategic and finance plans; - participation in other regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Abidjan Convention; - participation in the SC Working Group on RRI
Amazon Basin Initiative	Members meeting in 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adoption of the coordination committee - adoption of the Action Plan; - preparation of a GEF project implementation framework

Ramsar Regional Initiative	Operations (governance meetings held)	Success (activities, products and results achieved)
Central Asia Initiative	Members meeting	- promotion of the RRI at different meetings, through newsletters and a new website; - preparation of two project proposals, one of which - was successfully funded by the Government of Japan; - participation in SC53
Indo-Burma Initiative	Steering Committee meeting	- adoption of ToR; - inception workshop identified priorities and launched a German-funded programme for lower Mekong basin; - training and development of vulnerability assessment tool; - ongoing work on strategic plan, communications and outreach

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2018

10. In Resolution XII.8, paragraph 14, the Conference of the Parties included “financial support in the Convention core budget line Support to Regional Initiatives, as listed in Annex 1 of 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”.
11. In the same Resolution, paragraph 15, the Conference 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”.
12. The four eligible RRIs submitted, in January 2018, as part of their financial reports and work plans for 2018, new requests for Ramsar core budget support for their operations in 2018, as detailed in Table 2:

Table 2: Funding of new RRIs for 2018 (all figures in CHF)

Ramsar Regional Initiative	Carried forward for activities in 2018	Total budget for activities in 2018	Requested Ramsar 2018 budget contribution	Proposed Ramsar budget 2018 allocation
Senegal Basin	21,567	77,000	42,000	30,000
Amazon Basin	30,000	75,000	30,000	30,000
Central Asia	57,656	135,015	30,000	30,000
Indo-Burma	38,480	122,773	30,000	30,000
Total			132,000	120,000

13. The Standing Committee is invited to decide how to allocate the amount available in the Ramsar core budget line *D. Support to Regional Initiatives* (CHF 120,000). Proposed in Table 2 above is an allocation of CHF30,000 to each of the four eligible RRIs for their activities in 2018.