

2019 update on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

The 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 in accordance with Resolution XIII.9 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021*;
- ii) request the Secretariat to review the reporting format and process to prepare the summary assessment of the operations and achievements provided for in paragraph 28 of Resolution XIII.9, and to submit a proposal to the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee;
- iii) allocate funds from the 2019 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” (Resolution XIII.2) to provide start-up funding to newly established Initiatives for their activities in 2019, as follows:
 - CHF 25,000 to the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin;
 - CHF 25,000 to the Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin;
 - CHF 25,000 to the Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia; and
 - CHF 25,000 to the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative;
- iv) instruct the Secretariat to finalize contractual funding agreements rapidly with these four Ramsar Regional Initiatives, to allow smooth progress with the implementation of their 2019 work plans; and
- v) consider the Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group and the allocation of funds, according to paragraph 9 of Resolution XIII.9 and Standing Committee Decision SC56-07.

Background

1. At its seventh meeting (COP7, San José, 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, now referred to as a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI).
2. At its 13th meeting (COP13, Dubai, 2018), in paragraph 1 of Resolution XIII.9 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2019-2021*, the Conference recalled that RRIs “which include regional centres for training and capacity building and regional networks to facilitate cooperation, are intended as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of

the Convention in specific geographic regions, through voluntary international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern”.

3. Through paragraph 11 of Resolution XIII.9, COP13 endorsed the following 19 RRIs as operating in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands until COP14:
 - Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre – Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA);
 - Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia (RCC-EA);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACOWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (HAW);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin;
 - Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet);
 - Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs;
 - Regional Initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in the Amazon River Basin;
 - East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA);
 - Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI);
 - Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet);
 - Carpathian Wetland Ramsar Regional Initiative (CWI);
 - Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (NorBalWet); and
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).

Progress by the 19 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2018

4. At its 12th meeting (COP12, Punta del Este, 2015), in paragraph 12 of Resolution XII.8 on *Regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*, the Conference of the Contracting 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”.
5. The Secretariat maintains regular contact with the RRIs to help ensure that their objectives and work programmes are in alignment with the Convention’s Strategic Plan, and that the Operational Guidelines for RRIs are applied.
6. The coordinators of RRIs were requested to use the annual reporting form 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 of work in 2018 and planned work for 2019, including a financial overview, to the Secretariat in early 2019. These reports are available at the following URL:
https://www.ramsar.org/search?f%5B0%5D=type%3Adocument&f%5B1%5D=field_tag_body_vent%3A593&f%5B2%5D=field_sort_date%3A2019&sort=field_sort_date&order=desc&search_api_views_fulltext.

7. The Secretariat reviewed the reports and prepared a summary of the information, focusing on the results achieved by the 19 RRIs and their ongoing activities, as well as the application of the principles for RRIs defined at paragraph 8 of Resolution XIII.9. The summary is presented at Annex 1 of this document. The Secretariat notes that the information provided by RRIs is variable, with some RRIs providing more and others less detailed information, making it very difficult to identify common trends, identify gaps and, in some cases, verify the application of the principles. It is noted that the main activities carried out by RRIs in 2018 include capacity building, training and workshops, and dissemination of tools; strengthening networks; CEPA activities increasing awareness of wetland values and wise use; and establishment and management of governance and administration of the RRIs. Some RRIs reported successful fundraising efforts which enabled them to implement their action plans. Some supported specific on-the-ground projects and initiatives. A number met during the pre-COP13 and COP13 meetings. The information provided on the challenges they faced is limited. The most commonly mentioned challenge was the difficulty of mobilizing financial resources; this caused activities planned in 2018 to be delayed.
8. Based upon the available terms of reference or regulations of each RRI, it is noted that the status or role of the Convention Secretariat and its participation in the RRI, and their financial procedures, vary and in some cases are not clear in the terms of reference or regulations. The role of the Secretariat in the governing and administrative bodies of the RRIs needs to be reviewed in more detail in line with the Secretariat's competencies and accountabilities, and further clarity is needed in the RRIs' terms of reference or regulations, to meet the principles defined in Resolution XIII.9.
9. The above points are relevant to the preparation by the Secretariat of "a summary assessment of the operations and achievements of the RRIs operating during the period 2019-2021 for consideration by the Standing Committee and submission to COP14" in accordance with paragraph 28 of Resolution XIII.9. The Secretariat therefore suggests that the reporting format and process be revised, taking into account paragraph 8 of Resolution XIII.9 and the new Operational Guidelines referred to in paragraph 10 as appropriate. It should be noted that the Convention's Legal Advisor will also prepare a legal analysis of relevant Resolutions, as requested in Resolution XIII.9.

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2019

10. In Resolution XIII.9, paragraph 14, the Conference of the Parties noted "that Resolution XIII.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters* includes within the Convention core budget for 2019-2021 a budget line 'Support to Ramsar Regional Initiatives', to provide start-up support for the running costs of RRIs established for fewer than six years."
11. In paragraph 15 of Resolution XIII.9, the Conference decided "that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to eligible RRIs for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 will be determined annually by the Standing Committee, based on the most recent annual reports and updated work plans to be submitted in accordance with the required format and timetable, and informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance to the Standing Committee".
12. The four eligible RRIs submitted, in February 2019, as part of their financial reports and work plans for 2019, new requests for Ramsar core budget support for their operations in 2019, as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Funding of new Ramsar Regional Initiatives for 2019 (all figures in CHF)

Ramsar Regional Initiatives	Expenditure in 2018	Residual amount from 2018	Forecast/ budgeted expenditure for activities in 2019	Requested Ramsar 2019 budget contribution	Secretariat's proposed Ramsar budget 2019 allocation
Senegal Basin	800	41,200	119,000	53,000	25,000
Amazon Basin	37,063	32,000	60,000	30,000	25,000
Central Asia	19,879	44,176	70,000	30,000	25,000
Indo-Burma	109,708	13,064	75,000	30,000	25,000
Total				143,000	100,000

13. The Standing Committee is invited to decide how to allocate the amount available (CHF 100,000) in the Ramsar core budget line D "Support to Regional Initiatives". The Secretariat proposes in Table 2 above an allocation of CHF 25,000 to each of the four eligible RRs for their activities in 2019.

Re-establishment of the (open-ended) Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group

14. Through Resolution XIII.9 the Conference of Contracting Parties re-established the (open-ended) Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working group under Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure, to draft new *Operational guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, and requested the Standing Committee at its 56th meeting to facilitate the functioning of the Working Group and allocate core budget surplus. The Standing Committee at that meeting agreed to defer further consideration of the Working Group, and of the allocation of funds, until its 57th meeting (Decision SC56-07). The Standing Committee is accordingly invited to consider the Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group and the allocation of funds.

Annex 1
Summary of RRIs Annual Report 2018 and principles from Resolution XIII.9

Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) and year of establishment	Principles from Resolution XIII.9					Financial resources	Expenditure in 2018 (CHF)	Key activities	Challenges
	No. of countries supporting the RRI	TORs (including Rules of Procedure)	Structure and governance	Status/role of the Ramsar Secretariat	Financial management				
Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), 2009	5	Yes	Governing Council is the supreme policy making body and responsible for all affairs. The RAMCEA Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day activities and report to the Governing Council.	Observer	RAMCEA Secretariat's responsibility	Government of Uganda, donors (UN Foundation, other partner states)	28,870	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation on lesson learnt from use of earth observation data for wetland monitoring - Conducted a training for use of earth observation data for wetland monitoring and reporting (19 participants) - Policy brief on role of earth observation data in wetland inventory and reporting to SDG 6.6.1 - Conducted RAMs to 3 Sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource mobilization - Lobbying of the various partner states for support the implementation of key outputs and development of networks with local and international institutions
Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO), 1999	30	Yes	Administrative bodies are the Board of Directors (the highest governing body on which the final responsibility for critical decisions) and the Executive Director.	Permanent Member of the Board of Directors	Responsibility of the Board to approve budget, supervise financial management	Ministry of Environment(Panama), SENACYT, IUCN / ORMA (Honduras and El Salvador)	251,830	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of a monitoring procedure for administrative, technical and financial management of the Centre - Promotion and dissemination of Ramsar tools and Resolutions - Establishment of mechanisms for public outreach and information of the scientific community about the Centre's activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visiting countries in the Western Hemisphere to better understand their needs and being able to respond - Preparation of the programme on capacity building according to Parties' need

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Ramsar Regional Centre - Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA), 2002	15	Yes	Administrative bodies are the Collaborative Management Board and the RRC-CWA Secretariat. The Collaborative Management Board provides strategic guidance, approves programmes/activities, and approves budget and financial regulation.	Collaborative Management Board Member	Collaborative Management Board reviews annual reports and approves the budget and financial regulations.	Department of Environment (Iran), Ministry of Energy (Iran)	39,105	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WWD programmes, Ramsar Advisory Mission No. 88 - Expansion of Collaboration and cooperation with other international and regional organizations - Activate Ramsar City MOUs and sister affiliated agreements - Cooperation with NABU (Crane Conservation Germany) and Birdlife Turkey 	- Financial difficulties, mainly caused by the Centre's legal status and identity
Ramsar Regional Centre - East Asia (RRC-EA), 2009	18	No (structural information is available on their website)	The Steering Committee provides guidance in the development of policies and programmes. The Executive Director leads the day-to-day operations.	Steering Committee member	Reported to Steering Committee, Financial Officer is posted	Ministry of Environment (Republic of Korea), Suncheon City	659,590	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEPA (Regional workshop, sub-regional workshop, national training) - Network - Grant Programme (implementation of 4 projects for wetland conservation and wise use, 3 projects on World Wetlands Day) 	- Lack of a legal status, lack of human resources, limited support from the Ramsar Secretariat (assessment for SC52)

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West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WACOWet), 2009	13	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the WACOWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Procedure Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	No information in the annual report in 2018	No information in the annual report in 2018	- Conducted routine contact between member states and the Secretariat - 1 meeting at pre-COP (February 2018) and 2 meetings at COP13 (October 2018)	- Development of an operational agreement of cooperation with PRCM (to be signed) - No ground activities due to lack of funds
Niger River Basin (NigerWet), 2006	9	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the NigerWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	Government of Mali and other partners	23,350	- Establishment of secretariat - Development of projects and their financing - Updating of Ramsar Information Sheets	- Development of the regional database and cooperation to implement Ramsar Strategic Plan

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Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (HAW), 2005	8	Yes	The Coordination Committee (National Focal Points from member countries) and the Contact Group (member countries and other organizations) have annual meetings to follow up the implementation of the strategies and its action plans.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	Fundraising by the Ramsar Secretariat and UN Food and Agriculture Organization	39,700	- Implementation of the Action Plan for the regional strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of High Andean wetlands	- Scoping funding sources for the implementation of the regional project
Initiatives for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin, 2009	5	Yes	The Coordination Committee (member countries) as a governance body reviews progress.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee)	5 member Contracting Parties, Wetlands for the Future Fund	12,000	- Worked with wetland users for sustainable use and restoration - Inclusion of wetlands in planning strategies - Monitoring all activities	- Supporting Ramsar Site managers and increasing their capacities - Finding the necessary funds

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Caribbean Wetlands Regional Initiative (CariWet), 2009	14 (11 from Contracting Parties, 3 from overseas territories)	Yes	The Regional Initiative Committee is coordinated by two member countries and includes each of Contracting Parties, the Ramsar Secretariat, and the Caribbean sub-regional representatives at the Standing Committee (past, present, and future).	Regional Initiative Committee member providing support	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee)	Contribution from members	In-kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of achievements and progress at Pan-America Meeting (approval of IKI project, strengthening of governance body, work plan and financial strategy). - Preparatory meeting for COP13 (11 countries) - Revision of the IKI project document 	- Delay of implementation of IKI project
Regional Initiative for the Integral Management and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs, 2009	14	Yes	The coordination of the Initiative is led by two member countries with the Ramsar Secretariat's support. The Initiative has a regional committee, working groups and support groups, in which Contracting Parties, Ramsar IOPs, and other international organizations participate.	Provides support to the regional committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee)	Contribution from members	1,200 + in-kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated data on coral reef and mangrove coverage - Organized discussion on documents related to regional initiatives for COP13 - Organized a side event at COP13 	- Securing the sustainability of financial resources

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East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, 2006	18	No (structural information is available on their website)	The EAAFP Management Committee provides general policy, operational and financial direction to the EAAFP Secretariat. A meeting of the Partnership is held annually to oversee the implementation of the Partnership.	Partner	Reporting to the Meeting of Partners (MOP), Financial officer position posted	Incheon City, Partner's voluntary contribution, other resources (fundraising)	331,286 (USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of Flyway Site Network (New sites: 9) - CEPA on migratory waterbirds and their habitats - Small Grant Programme (5 projects) - Capacity building (1 workshop, 1 Meeting of Partners (200 participants)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change of National Focal Points - Weak commitment of countries at higher political levels - Development pressures on wetlands in the region
Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet), 1991	27	Yes	The Initiative includes the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com); the MedWet Steering Group; the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network; the MedWet Secretariat. The MedWet/Com is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the initiatives, including approval of strategic documents, annual budget and audited financial reports.	Member of the Steering Group	The MedWet Secretariat administrates the approved budgets and submits the annual financial report to the MedWet Steering Group and the MedWet/Com.	Member countries' contributions, French water agency, MAVA Foundation Grant, French <i>Ministère de la Transition Ecologique et Solidaire</i> , Tour du Valat	331,751	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate the activities of the governing and subsidiary bodies of MedWet - Raise the profile of MedWet - Create communication tools; - Raise additional funds to implement MedWet Framework of Actions 2016-2030 	No information

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Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI), 2006	7	Yes	The implementation body of CWI is a Board, which is composed of the focal points from each member. The Board elects a chair to guide the proceedings and meet periodically.	Provide inputs to the Board	No detailed information	State Nature Conservation and Speleology, member Parties and others	23,957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data on wetlands research and projects was collected. - Consultations on review of the draft Carpathian Red List of threatened habitat and species was held. - Carpathian Cultural Heritage in wetlands was published. - CWI strategies / priorities for 2019 – 2024 was developed. - Bilateral consultations with experts were organized in transboundary areas. - Participated in the seminar on wetland restoration and management in transboundary area. - Activities of awareness on cultural values in wetlands organized during various events. 	No information
Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiatives (NorBalWet), 2005	10	Yes	The Coordination Group is composed of the Ramsar National Focal Points from each participating county and it is the decision-making body.	Member of the Coordination Group	Host Country provides administrative support	Contributions from members	1,568	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved website for security - 2 meetings were held for draft action plan and project ideas for 2019 	No information

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Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet), 2007	7	Yes	The implementing bodies are: the Management Body, the Coordination Unit and the National Working Groups. The responsibilities of the Management Body include taking strategic decisions, and approving and monitoring annual work plans.	Member of Management Body	No detailed information	Reedbed biomass, Michael Succow Foundation, German Federal Government, Agricola NGO, private enterprise	27,377	- International workshop "Execution of the requirements of the Ramsar Convention in Ukraine" (42 representatives) - 5th Meeting of the Management Body (11 representatives) - Regional Conference on Wetlands of International Importance in the Azov-Black Sea Region (40 Representatives)	No information
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet), 2016	4	Yes (by-laws and internal regulations)	The governance bodies are: the Commission, the Governing Board, and the Secretariat of the Initiative. The Commission's responsibilities include making decision on directions of the initiatives, approving strategies, programme and work plan, and controlling financial resources.	No detailed information	Managed by Coordinator	Ramsar Core Budget	800	- Meeting to set up and facilitate the operations of the Secretariat and the Governing Board.	- Create a basin-wide wetlands observatory - Analyze consequences of hydro-electric developments and water-use disputes in order to propose sustainable solutions

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Regional Initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in the Amazon River Basin, 2016	8	Yes	The Initiative is coordinated by the Coordination Committee, of which the members are the Ramsar National Focal Points.	The Ramsar Secretariat supports the governance body	Managed by the Ramsar Secretariat under decisions of the coordinator of the Initiative	Ramsar core budget	37,063	- Establishment and development of the RRI and basin-wide project concepts	Elaboration and adoption of the basin-wide wetland strategy and funding proposal with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia Initiative (RRI-CA), 2016	3	No	The decision-making body is the Coordination Committee, which is composed of three key members and six alternatives members from member countries.	No detailed information	Technical Secretary of the RRI-CA (based at CAREC)	Ramsar Core Budget	19,879	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trained the Ramsar National Focal Points - Promotion of 2018 World Wetlands Day - Organized pre-COP meeting and regional meeting of RRI-CA (late April 2017) - Promotion and dissemination of RRI-CA and its goals through various platforms - Development of project proposals for inclusion of wetlands management and conservation issues into the national and regional agenda - Raising awareness of the local communities about the importance of conservation and sustainable use of wetlands - Identification of the needs of countries 	No other source of funding apart from Ramsar

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Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), 2016	5	No (structural information is available on their website)	The Steering Committee, which is composed of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities of member countries, provides oversight of the Initiative's operation.	Observer	Managed by IUCN Asia Regional Office / Senior Programme Officer for IUCN	Ramsar core budget, BMUB-Mekong WET	109,708	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of sub-regional strategic plan for IBRRI, IBRRI Steering Committee, - Strengthening of knowledge of key Ramsar tools and guidelines by translation into local languages - Development of communication strategy for IBRRI 	No information