

Financial and budgetary matters – Report of the Subgroup on Finance Small Grants Fund – Proposal for final beneficiaries

Actions requested:

Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the actions taken by the Secretariat to phase out the Small Grants Fund programme;
- ii. review and approve the proposed selection of recipients to receive funding from the Small Grants Fund; and
- iii. decide how the remaining balance in the Small Grants Fund should be utilized.

Introduction

1. The Small Grants Fund was established by the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention at its 4th meeting (COP4, 1990), with the name “Wetland Conservation Fund”, as a mechanism to assist developing countries in implementing the Convention and to enable the conservation and wise use of wetland resources. COP6 in 1996, through Resolution VI.6, adopted the current name of the Fund and decided that countries with economies in transition should also be eligible for funding.
2. The Conference of the Contracting Parties at its 13th meeting (COP13) adopted Resolution XIII.2 on *Financial and budgetary matters*. Paragraph 31 of that Resolution:

“AGREES to phase out the Small Grants Fund Programme upon exhaustion of its currently available resources; and URGES the Secretariat and ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to seek funding alternatives for small-scale projects”.
3. Following this guidance the Secretariat has issued a call for proposals to exhaust the currently available resources, which total CHF 137,000.

Actions taken by the Secretariat

4. Following the guidance provided in Resolution XIII.2, the Secretariat has undertaken the following actions:

- It amended the *Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use Operational Guidelines for the Triennium 2009 – 2012*, based upon the instruction provided by Resolution XIII.2.
- It issued a call for proposals on 26 February 2019 to all Contracting Parties inviting submission of proposals from eligible Parties in accordance with the criteria and timeline provided in the *Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use Operational Guidelines 2019*.
- Fifty proposals were received by the deadline of 6 May 2019. Thirteen were considered by the Secretariat to have met the Stage I review criteria and were deemed eligible for Stage II review.
- The Secretariat evaluated these proposals using the Stage II review criteria and ranked them based upon their total score.

Proposed grant recipients for endorsement by SC57

5. The Secretariat recommends that SC57 consider for approval the following four projects which received the highest ratings to receive funding from the Small Grants Fund:
 - Tanzania: Adapting indigenous/traditional knowledge and innovations to maintain wetland dependent lifestyles – CHF 34,876;
 - Cambodia: Strengthen Cambodia’s wetland conservation through enhancing Ramsar site management effectiveness and improving site legal status – CHF 35,000;
 - Mexico: Integración en la planificación y estrategia de comunicación de Ramsar MX – CHF 29,526 ; and
 - Paraguay: Strengthening Paraguay’s capacity of conservation and wise use of wetlands – CHF 34,818.

Use of remaining Small Grants Fund balance

2. Should SC57 endorse the above projects for funding, a balance of CHF 2,779 will remain in the Small Grants Fund. To fully exhaust the currently available resources as directed by Resolution XIII.2, the Secretariat proposes that the Standing Committee considers approving that this balance be used to fund the development of an updated guidance document for Parties on how to prepare and write project proposals. The quality and completeness of proposals received varied greatly and the Secretariat believes that Parties could benefit from guidance on how to write funding proposals. Such guidance was prepared in 2010, so an update could reflect current giving trends and practices. A consultant would be engaged for this activity.