



Organization of
American States

**Memorandum of Cooperation
Between
The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR, Irán, 1971) and
The General secretariat of the Organization of American States**

This Memorandum of Cooperation is entered into by and between the Secretariat of the **Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR, Irán, 1971)** (hereinafter "RAMSAR") and the **General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS)**, through its **Department of Sustainable Development (DSD)** of the **GS/OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development**,

Preamble

Whereas:

Since its inception in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR, Iran, 1971) has provided the single most important intergovernmental forum on wetland conservation issues. According to the Convention's mission statement, the Contracting Parties agree to "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world";

The Convention is founded on three pillars:

1. Promoting wise use of wetlands,
2. Developing international cooperation, and
3. Developing a network of Wetland sites of International Importance.

The conservation and wise management of wetlands through the designation of wetlands for the RAMSAR List of Wetlands of International Importance, especially the obligation to maintain the ecological character of designated sites, deserves special recognition. This obligation recognizes the importance of wetlands for the maintenance of healthy and productive inland freshwater and coastal systems. In the context of water and wetlands, the Convention on Wetlands thus addresses issues which guide its Contracting Parties on ways to achieve sustainable development;

In the strategic plan of the Convention 2009-2015 it is clearly stated the importance of international cooperation to enhance the conservation and wise use of wetlands using effective international cooperation, through *inter alia* the active application of the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the RAMSAR Convention* under which, work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental agencies (IGOs) is part of the relevant strategies;

The Americas hemisphere encompassing 35 nations addresses issues from several mandates, endorsements and resolutions by the countries in the Western Hemisphere, including the 1940 Western Hemisphere Convention; Initiative 31 of the Plan of Action of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in December 1996, called on the governments of the Hemisphere to take actions for the *“Conservation and utilization, in a sustainable manner, of inland, coastal, and marine water resources, including wetlands, in the region”*; and that Initiative 50 of said plan called for the promotion of hemispheric cooperation at all levels, including through the use of existing transboundary agreements and initiatives, in the conservation, management, and sustainable use of water resources and biological diversity and the exchange of information and experiences on issues related to inland watersheds, river basins, and sub-basins.

The Convention on Wetlands and the GS/OAS share similar conservation and management goals and the positive cooperation between the two institutions to date has been expressed through mutual recognition.

Recognizing that the GS/OAS is the central and permanent organ of the OAS and has the power to establish and foster ties of cooperation, under Article 112 (h) of the OAS Charter and General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 57 (I-O/71).

Therefore the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the GS/OAS through its DSD, recognizing the need to cooperate in areas of mutual interest and in order to promote coordination and collaboration towards the goal of pursuing their respective mandates, agree to the following principles and mechanisms of cooperation.

Article 1
Objective

The objective of this Memorandum of Cooperation (hereinafter “MOU”) is to establish a framework for collaboration between the GS/OAS through its DSD and RAMSAR to further common goals.

Article 2
Joint activities

Joint activities undertaken within the parameters of this Memorandum include sharing data, knowledge and information relevant to biodiversity conservation of wetlands and sustainable management within the Americas and development and execution of joint projects related to RAMSAR Strategic Plan and the DSD mandates, such as the proposed UNEP implemented, DSD executed, GEF funded project, titled “Valuation of Ecosystem Services,” which is part of the RAMSAR Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High Andean referred to in Annex I.

Upon identification of specific projects or programs such as the one included in Annex I to be executed jointly, the Parties shall give consideration to developing special cooperation relations for this purpose through supplementary agreements, memoranda of understanding or an exchange of letters containing the applicable conditions for each program, project and/or activity.

Article 3
Responsibilities of GS/OAS through its DSD:

The DSD shall:

1. Collaborate with RAMSAR to enable the sharing of valuation of ecosystems services data through open-access standards between Pan American sources and RAMSAR, and vice-versa;
2. Collaborate with RAMSAR to promote adoption of RAMSAR guidelines relevant to wetlands biodiversity conservation within the Americas;
3. Collaborate, as appropriate, with RAMSAR in the implementation of programs pertaining to the promotion and use of biodiversity information and management tools and capacity building to develop Valuation of Ecological Services (VES) programs (RAMSAR regional initiatives e.g. Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High Andean Wetlands, Annex I and others as appropriate);
4. Participate, as appropriate, in workshops, working groups, and other activities organized by RAMSAR to address capacity-building, technical approaches, policy issues and other concerns of mutual interest to OAS-DSD and RAMSAR;
5. Promote relevant cooperative research, training activities, technical exchange of specialists and other opportunities for professional interaction among participants concerned with wetlands biodiversity information exchange;
6. Share with RAMSAR, within the limits of available resources, expertise pertaining to best practices and lesson learned in valuation of ecosystems services methodologies;
7. Promote awareness of RAMSAR by making information about RAMSAR activities, technical guidelines, and information resources available, as appropriate, through the GS/OAS political bodies, networks such as the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) and its Council as well as other mechanisms;
8. Facilitate, as appropriate, the effective participation of a RAMSAR designate in the management of joint activities developed under this Memorandum of Cooperation.

Article 4

Responsibilities of RAMSAR

RAMSAR shall:

1. Collaborate with the DSD to promote the adoption of interoperability standards for the exchange of data and technical information relevant to biodiversity conservation within the Americas;
2. Collaborate, as appropriate, with the DSD and IABIN Council in the implementation of activities pertaining to the promotion and use of wetlands, in particular the Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High Andean Wetlands, Mangrove Initiative, and in capacity building to develop Valuation of Ecological Services (VES) programs;
3. Collaborate with the DSD in the promotion of the integration of biodiversity and geospatial data in the development of value-added decision making tools within the Americas;

3. This Memorandum may be reviewed at the request of either Party. Any amendment to this Memorandum will be effected only on the basis of written consent of RAMSAR and GS/OAS by the duly authorized representatives of the Parties. The instruments in which the modifications are set out shall be attached as annexes to this Agreement and shall form part of it.
4. This Memorandum of Cooperation shall enter into force upon signature of both Parties. The term for this Memorandum of Cooperation is six (6) years.
5. This Agreement may be terminated by mutual consent or by either of the Parties by written six (6) months notice.
6. Notwithstanding the termination of this Agreement, any supplementary agreements, memoranda of understanding and letters referred to in Article 2 that the Parties have signed and that have been duly financed shall be continued to completion unless the Parties mutually decide otherwise.
7. Articles 6 and 7 shall survive the expiry or the termination of this Agreement.
8. Annex I titled "Nota Conceptual sobre Proyecto de Valoración de Servicios Ambientales en el marco de la Estrategia Regional de Conservación y Uso Sostenible de Humedales Altoandinos" is incorporated by reference to this MOU and is integral to this MOU.



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(RAMSAR, Iran, 1971)



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