

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
31st Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 6-10 June 2005

DOC. SC31-21

Agenda item 9.4

Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider the attached proposals from Contracting Parties for regional initiatives to be considered for COP9 recognition in the framework of the Convention, as well as the draft COP9 Resolution on this matter, as the basis for providing recommendations to COP9.

Note by the Ramsar Secretariat

1. Currently, one regional initiative has been formally recognised as operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention. This is the Mediterranean Wetland Initiative (MedWet). Since 2001 the MedWet Initiative and its Co-ordination Unit has operated under the authority of the Secretary General of the Convention, and through Resolution VIII.30 it has been financially supported by the Contracting Parties in the Mediterranean region through additional annual contributions, by hosting and financial contributions from the Government of Greece, and for the 2003-2005 triennium from a contribution from the Convention's core budget.
2. Through Resolution VIII.30, Parties at COP8 recognised the value and support that relevant regional initiatives can bring to Convention implementation, and they established (Annex I to Resolution VIII.30) "*Guidance for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands*".
3. Contracting Parties at COP8 (Resolution VIII.30 paragraph 9) also considered it appropriate to establish a Convention core budget line "Support to Regional Initiatives", when one or more regional initiatives are evaluated by the COP in accordance with the Guidelines and considered to be worthy of financial support from the Convention core budget. The Guidelines also indicate that when deciding on any such financial support from the Convention core budget, the COP should take into account a geographically equitable distribution.
4. Two other aspects of the Guidance in Annex I of Resolution VIII.30 indicate a guiding and decision-making role for the COP and Standing Committee, making it implicit that the COP should see and approve the purpose and *modus operandi* of any proposed regional initiative as appropriate within the framework of the Convention:

"The Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee shall receive, through the Ramsar Bureau, reports on their activities and shall oversee their general policies relating to the implementation of the Convention" (Annex I, paragraph 11); and

"Specific arrangements as to the coordination between a regional initiative and the Convention should be worked out by the Ramsar Bureau under the

guidance of the Standing Committee, and such arrangements should be ultimately approved by the Conference of the Parties” (Annex I, paragraph 12).

5. When considering such matters, the Standing Committee and COP should also be mindful that approval of such regional initiatives will require sufficient capacity to be available within the Ramsar Secretariat to develop and implement any such coordination arrangements.
6. In consideration of the terms of Resolution VIII.30, and recognising that a number of other regional initiatives for wetland conservation and wise use are under various stages of development in different parts of the world, in March 2005 the Standing Committee’s Subgroup on COP9 requested the Secretariat to issue a Diplomatic Note (which was sent to all Parties on 21 March 2005) concerning procedures for submission of regional initiatives for consideration by COP9. The Diplomatic Note states that:

“In accordance with Decision SG COP9-11 of the recent meeting of the Standing Committee’s Subgroup on COP9, any Contracting Party wishing to submit a proposal for a regional initiative to be considered by COP9 for endorsement within the framework of the Convention is requested to complete the attached pro-forma and to submit it to the Secretariat by 30 April 2005, so that all such proposals can be prepared for discussion at SC31.

Any initiative considering a request to COP9 for financial support through the establishment of core budget lines for the 2006-2008 triennium should also provide the Standing Committee with additional budgetary information indicating the amount sought from core, and the amounts (in Swiss franc (CHF) equivalent) available or pledged from other sources.”
7. The form referred to in the Diplomatic Note provides a tabular framework for those Parties submitting a regional initiative request to describe their initiative against each of the terms of the Guidelines in Annex I to Resolution VIII.30.
8. By 30 May 2005, the Secretariat has received 10 such regional initiative proposal forms. These are summarised, by Ramsar region(s), in the table below. The forms provided by the Parties proposing these initiatives are provided in DOC. SC31-21 Additional. Where the proposal was received in either French or Spanish, these have been translated by the Secretariat into English for ease of comparison. Forms in original languages will be available to the Standing Committee for consultation on request.
9. The Standing Committee may wish to consider requesting that the forms of those initiatives approved by Standing Committee for consideration by COP9 are provided in a COP9 Information Paper.

Title of proposed initiative	Countries involved in the proposal:	Contracting Party(ies) submitting the proposal
Africa		
West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet)	Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Togo	Benin
Awareness raising campaign on conservation and wise use of wetlands for the sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against poverty in Central Africa. [Campagne de sensibilisation sur la conservation et l'utilisation rationnelle des zones humides pour la gestion durable des ressources naturelles et la lutte contre la pauvreté en Afrique Centrale]	République Démocratique du Congo, République du Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Cameroun, Gabon, République Centrafricaine, Guinée Equatoriale, Sao Tomé et Príncipe, Togo, Bénin, Tchad	D.R. Congo
Asia		
Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia in Iran (RRC-CWA) <i>(Note. The initiative to establish this regional training centre was approved by COP8 Resolution VIII.41)</i>	Western and Central Asian countries	Islamic Republic of Iran
Himalayan Initiative	China, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan & Bangladesh	China
Asia/Oceania/North America		
WSSD Type II Partnership for the conservation and sustainable use of sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in East Asia, South East Asia and Australasia (The Partnership) <i>(Note. The implementation of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy was endorsed by COP8 Resolution VIII.37)</i>	Japan, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States of America, Viet Nam	Japan [& Australia – expected]
Europe		
Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI)	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Ukraine	Slovak Republic
The Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)	Denmark/Greenland, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Russia and Sweden	Norway
Neotropics		
Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands	Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Perú, Colombia, Venezuela,	Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Perú, Colombia, Venezuela,

[Estrategia Regional de Conservación y Uso Sostenible de los Humedales Altoandinos] (<i>Note. The approach embodied in this proposal was requested in COP8 Resolution VIII.39</i>)	Ecuador, Costa Rica	Ecuador, Costa Rica
Neotropics/ North America		
Regional Initiative to apply the Ramsar Convention: Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)	Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Republican Dominican, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.	Panama, Argentina, Nicaragua, United States, Canada, Bahamas representing the Western Hemisphere Contracting Parties.
North America		
None		
Oceania		
Regional initiative for the protection and wise use of wetlands for the Pacific Islands	Current Oceania Contracting Parties - Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Samoa, Marshall Islands. Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in advanced stages of accession – Fiji, Cook Islands, Tonga Other Pacific Island Countries who have shown interest in joining the Ramsar Convention - Niue, Nauru, Tokelau, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu. Overseas Dependent Territories in Oceania – New Caledonia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas	Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Palau, Samoa, and Marshall Islands

10. In addition to the MedWet Initiative, five of these proposed initiatives have also provided a request for the COP to consider allocating funds for 2006-2008 from a “Support to Regional Initiatives” core budget line (see paragraph 14). Budget information provided by those initiatives requesting a core budget allocation is included with the proposal forms in DOC. SC31-21 Additional.
11. Concerning the MedWet Initiative, the Government of Greece has indicated its willingness to continue to host the MedWet Coordination Unit and its provision of office

facilities and financial support for the 2006-2008 triennium. In addition, a number of Mediterranean Basin Contracting Parties have indicated that they are willing to continue the provision of additional voluntary contributions to the MedWet Initiative for the 2006-2008 triennium. The MedWet Initiative is also requesting a continuing allocation from the Convention core budget for the 2006-2008 triennium, as is allowed for in Resolution VIII.30.

12. Following consultations with its host country, Greece, and other countries in the Initiative, the MedWet Coordination Unit has prepared a 2006-2008 budget for consideration by the Standing Committee. This is included as Annex II of the attached draft COP Resolution on regional initiatives (COP9 DR8) attached to this note. The Standing Committee, with the advice of its Subgroup on Finance, should agree what MedWet budget 2006-2008 to put forward to COP9.
13. Concerning the provision of additional voluntary MedWet contributions by Mediterranean Basin Contracting Parties, it should be noted that the budgets in COP9 DR8 Annex II are based on full annual (and timely) payments of these contributions. In practice, during the current triennium this has not happened. Although to date 94.5% has now been received for 2003, only 66.5% of the 2004 contributions have been received so far, and only 31% for 2005. It should be stressed that these shortfalls and delays in receipt of the contributions have led to serious cashflow challenges for the smooth operation of the MedWet Coordination Unit in its implementation of the MedWet Initiative.
14. The funds (in Swiss francs) requested from the Convention core budget 2006-2008 by regional initiatives are as follows:

Name of proposed initiative	2006	2007	2008	Total requested from core budget: 2006-2008	Other funding: 2006-2008
MedWet Initiative	47,497	47,497	47,497	139,491	1,822,188, (including 570,580 from projects)
West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet)	171,574	[8,640]	[8,640]	188,854	123,702
Himalayan Initiative	~100,000	~100,000	~100,000	~300,000	[detailed budget not available]
Carpathian Wetland Initiative	[67,333]	[67,333]	[67,333]	202,000	22,000
Regional initiative for the protection and wise use of wetlands for the Pacific Islands	109,637	109,637	109,637	328,911 (431,812*)	[not identified in proposal]
Regional Initiative to apply the Ramsar Convention: Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)	100,000**	100,000**	100,000**	300,000**	187,000 confirmed; 3,921,050 to be sought
Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000	30,000 committed
Total funds requested from core:	616,041	453,107	453,107	1,522,255	

Notes. Where the funding request has not been provided on an annual basis, total funding request for the triennium has been divided equally between the years concerned and shown for each year, in [..].

- * budget tables for this initiative are presented for 2005/6, 2006/7, 2007/8 and 2008/9: in addition to the amounts requested for these latter three periods given in the table above, US\$ 84,150 (~CHF 102,901) is requested for 2005/6.
 - ** the precise amounts to be requested from a Convention core budget allocation for this initiative will be advised following overall Panama Centre budget approval by its Board when it meets in Gland on 6 June 2005, immediately prior to SC31.
15. The total requested by regional initiatives from any core budget line which may be established by COP9 for the 2006-2008 triennium is CHF 1,522,255.
 16. The core budget line sums requested for the 2006-2008 triennium (CHF 139,491) for the MedWet Initiative is significantly less than that allocated for the 2003-2005 triennium (CHF 240,000) and reflects the growing maturity of this initiative. Furthermore, although the core budget allocation requested represents only 7% of the total MedWet anticipated expenditure for the triennium, it will make an essential contribution towards operational costs and the maintenance of cashflow (see also paragraph 13).
 17. For the West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet), the sum requested from the Ramsar core budget of CHF 188,854 (US\$ 153,000) is 60% of the total budget, with the rest of the budget coming from Benin (25%), ECOWAS (11%) and an upcoming GEF project (4%). Concerning the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, the Standing Committee may wish to note that some 90% of the total anticipated expenditure is requested from a Convention core budget allocation. Thus these initiatives could be considered to not yet meet the expectation in the Resolution VIII.30 guidance that “a regional initiative requires ... financial support from Contracting Parties and other partners in the region”, and that “the launching of a regional ... initiative should rely on secured start-up funding for planned activities and projects”.
 18. The small sums (CHF 20,000 per annum) requested by the High Andean regional strategy initiative are designed to contribute towards the facilitation negotiations on the further development of the initiative, for which CHF 30,000 has already been committed by the private sector.
 19. The Standing Committee should consider what form of recommendation to make to COP9 concerning each of the proposed regional initiatives. There are several options, which include:
 - i. to consider that the proposed initiative and its established mechanisms is fully in line with the Guidelines set out in Annex I of Resolution VIII.30, and to recommend that the initiative is endorsed by COP9 as within the framework of the Convention;
 - ii. to consider that the proposed initiative is promising, but is not yet sufficiently developed to be fully in line with the Guidelines, and to recommend to COP9 that

the proposed initiative be requested to continue its development and submit a request for endorsement to COP10; or

- iii. to consider that the proposed initiative is not in line with the Guidelines and should not be considered further by COP9 for endorsement.
20. Concerning those proposed initiatives requesting the allocation of funds from a Convention core budget line, the Standing Committee should, with the advice of the Subgroup on Finance, consider whether to recommend to COP9 that one or more of these initiatives is “worthy for financial support from the Convention core budget” (Resolution VIII.30), and if so, whether any budget allocations should be recommended to COP9.
21. One option for the Standing Committee would be to identify which initiative(s) that are “worthy for financial support...” should receive priority for allocation of any core budget funds approved by COP9, with the sums allocated being dependent on the amount for this budget line approved by COP9. [Note that any such recommendations may also need to be taken into account in the triennial core budget proposals to be considered under Agenda item 10.1 (COP9 DR13).]

Recommendations to SC31

22. In order to assist the Standing Committee in these considerations, the Secretariat has reviewed the regional initiative forms received by 25 May 2005 from Contracting Parties, and has assessed whether each initiative has progressed in its development sufficiently to be fully in line with the expectations of Resolution VIII.30.
23. The Secretariat recommends that the following seven regional initiatives should be proposed to COP9 for endorsement within the framework of the Convention:
- ✓ West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet) – *Africa*
 - ✓ Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in Western and Central Asia in Iran (RRC-CWA) - *Asia*
 - ✓ Himalayan Initiative - *Asia*
 - ✓ WSSD Type II Partnership for the conservation and sustainable use of sites of international importance for migratory waterbirds in East Asia, South East Asia and Australasia (The Partnership) – *Asia/North America/Oceania*
 - ✓ Regional Strategy for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands - *Neotropics*
 - ✓ Ramsar Regional Center for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) – *Neotropics/North America*
 - ✓ Regional initiative for the protection and wise use of wetlands for the Pacific Islands - *Oceania*
24. The Secretariat suggests that the following two regional initiatives have not yet been developed sufficiently to fully meet the terms of Resolution VIII.30, but are clearly developing towards that situation and should be recommended to COP9 for encouragement for further development and consideration by COP10:

- ✓ Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI) - *Europe*
- ✓ The Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet) – *Europe*

25. The Secretariat considers that the following regional initiative should not be recommended to COP9, since it does not yet appear to be clearly designed to fulfil the COP8 guidelines, and it does not appear from the information in the proposal that it has been developed with, and is endorsed by, all those countries listed in the proposal:

- ✗ Awareness raising campaign on conservation and wise use of wetlands for the sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against poverty in Central Africa - *Africa*

26. The Standing Committee may wish to request the Secretariat to provide advice to the initiatives listed in paragraphs 23 to 25 above concerning which aspects of their *modus operandi* need to be further addressed so as to fully meet the requirements of Resolution VIII.30.

COP9 DR8

Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

1. RECALLING that the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution VII.19) provide the appropriate framework for promoting international collaboration amongst Contracting Parties and other partners;
2. ALSO RECALLING that Resolution VIII.30 recognised, *inter alia*, the importance of regional initiatives in promoting the objectives of the Convention, and established “*Guidelines for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands*”;
3. RECOGNISING that the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) already operates under the authority of the Secretary General and was recognised by Resolution VIII.30 as a model example of such regional initiatives;
4. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the Government of Greece has offered to continue hosting and contributing financially to the operation of the MedWet Coordination Unit in Athens for the triennium 2006-2008; and
5. AWARE that a number of regional initiatives for wetland conservation and wise use are under development in different parts of the world; and NOTING the submissions by Contracting Parties to the Standing Committee of proposals for developing regional initiatives to be recognised as working within the framework of the Convention (COP9 DOC. Xxx);

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

6. ENDORSES the Regional Initiatives listed in Annex I.A to this Resolution as being within the framework of the Convention on Wetlands in line with the Annex to Resolution VIII.30;
7. [AGREES to contribute financial support from the Convention core budget line “Support to Regional Initiatives” for the 2006-2008 triennium for specific regional initiatives, at the levels indicated in Annex I.A];
8. RECOGNISES the potential for those regional initiatives listed in Annex I.B to this Resolution to become operative within the framework of the Convention, subject to further development, and URGES the Parties concerned to progress their development and report to COP10 for consideration for endorsement;
9. AUTHORIZES the Secretary General to conclude, where appropriate, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with relevant governments with regard to the specific financial and institutional arrangements of the regional initiatives identified in the annex, and DIRECTS the Secretary General to report to the Standing Committee and COP10 on progress with these MoUs and the progress of regional initiatives in general;

10. RECOGNIZES specifically the critical importance of financial and political support from Contracting Parties of the region to the MedWet Initiative, and especially from the host country of its Coordination Unit; EXPRESSES ITS SINCERE GRATITUDE to the Government of Greece for hosting the MedWet Unit in Athens, [and ACCEPTS the generous offer of the Government of Greece to continue providing office facilities and financial support during the triennium 2006-2008 for the same purpose]; and
11. APPROVES the budget of the MedWet Coordination Unit as contained in Annex II of this Resolution;

ANNEX I

A. Regional initiatives for wetland conservation and wise use endorsed as operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention

[to be added after Standing Committee 31 decisions]

B. Regional initiatives recognised with potential for operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention, subject to further development and consideration by COP10

[to be added after Standing Committee 31 decisions]

C. Financial support to regional initiatives from the Convention's core budget line "Regional initiatives" for 2006-2008

[to be added after Standing Committee 31 and COP9 budget decisions]

ANNEX II

MedWet Coordination Unit Budget 2006-2008

INCOME (in Swiss Francs)

	2006	2007	2008
1. Host country (Greece)	263,483	263,483	263,483
2. Ramsar core budget (budget line xx)	46,497	46,497	46,497
3. MedWet countries	146,352	154,226	160,581
4. Projects	166,679	189,181	214,720
TOTAL INCOME	623,011	653,387	685,281
Budgeted expenditure	623,011	653,387	685,281

Notes on Income

1. Contribution by the Host Country (Greece), [as confirmed in the letter of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works to the Secretary General of the Convention, dated xxxxxxxx].
2. Contribution from the Ramsar core budget for the triennium 2006-2008 (budget line xxx – Support to Regional Initiatives).
3. Additional annual contributions from the Contracting Parties participating in MedWet earmarked to cover costs of the MedWet Coordination Unit (see table 1 for the list of contributions for 2006). These figures assume that 100% of contributions will be made by these countries.
4. Income from project overheads and project implementation undertaken by and through the MedWet Coordination Unit.

EXPENDITURES (in Swiss Francs)

	2006	2007	2008
1. STAFF COSTS			
a. MedWet Coordinator	127,168	133,527	140,203
b. Policy Officer (100%)	99,358	104,326	109,542
c. Programme development officer	72,415	76,036	79,838
d. CEPA Officer	72,415	76,036	79,838
e. Office Executive Assistant	49,454	51,927	54,523
f. Administration / accounting assistant	22,412	23,532	24,709
Total Staff Costs	443,223	465,384	488,653
2. EXPERTS & CONSULTANTS			
	23,249	24,411	25,631
3. TRAVEL			
	86,794	91,134	95,691
4. OFFICE COSTS			
a. General expenses / utilities	21,699	22,784	23,923
b. Communications	18,599	19,529	20,505
c. Equipment purchase & maintenance	13,949	14,647	15,379
Total Office Costs	54,247	56,959	59,807
5. MedWet/Com ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION	15,499	15,499	15,499
TOTAL	623,011	653,387	685,281

Notes on Expenditure

1. A 5% annual increase in gross salaries is foreseen for cost of living and performance-related salary increases.
2. From assessment of the tasks and workloads of MedWet Coordination Unit staff during the 2003-2005 triennium related to project implementation, the Policy Officer post will be increased from a 50% time post to a full-time post for the 2006-2008 triennium; and a new post of Administration/ Accounting Assistant will be created to handle financial matters, which in the 2003-2005 triennium have had to be handled by the MedWet Coordinator.
3. The MedWet/Com Annual Contribution budget line provides a contribution towards the MedWet Coordination Unit's costs of preparing meetings of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee to be held once every three years, between two consecutive COP meetings.

Table 1: Additional country contributions earmarked for MedWet Coordination Unit costs (in Swiss Francs)

Name of Country	UN %	Ramsar %	2006	2007	2008
			corrected for minimum CHF 550	corrected for minimum CHF 550	corrected for minimum CHF 550
			CHF	CHF	CHF
Albania	0.0050	0.0314	550	550	550
Algeria	0.0760	0.4777	672	710	741
Bosnia & Herzegovina	0.0030	0.0189	550	550	550
Bulgaria	0.0170	0.1068	550	550	550
Croatia	0.0370	0.2325	550	550	550
Cyprus	0.0390	0.2451	550	550	550
Egypt	0.1200	0.7542	1,061	1,121	1,170
France	6.0300	37.8993	53,307	56,333	58,776
Greece	0.5300	3.3311	4,685	4,951	5,166
Israel	0.4670	2.9352	4,128	4,363	4,552
Italy	4.8850	30.7028	43,185	45,637	47,616
Jordan	0.0110	0.0691	550	550	550
Lebanon	0.0240	0.1508	550	550	550
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0.1320	0.8296	1,167	1,233	1,287
Malta	0.0140	0.0880	550	550	550
Monaco	0.0030	0.0189	550	550	550
Morocco	0.0470	0.2954	550	550	550
Portugal	0.4700	2.9540	4,155	4,391	4,581
Serbia & Montenegro	0.0190	0.1194	550	550	550
Slovenia	0.0820	0.5154	725	766	799
Spain	2.5200	15.8385	22,278	23,542	24,563
Syrian Arab Republic	0.0380	0.2388	550	550	550
FYR Macedonia	0.0060	0.0377	550	550	550
Tunisia	0.0320	0.2011	550	550	550
Turkey	0.3720	2.3381	3,289	3,475	3,626
TOTALS		100	146,352	154,226	160,580

Note. This table is calculated using the UN scale of contributions for 2006. The calculations for 2007 and 2008 are indicative only: the exact figures will be calculated on the basis of the UN scale for each year, when it is known. The minimum contribution is set to 550 Swiss Francs.