

Agenda item XX

**The Ramsar Small Grants Fund and progress with
developments for future options**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to review the initial proposal by the contact group of the Subgroup on Finance, with a view to considering and endorsing the contact group's final proposal following its further discussions during the SC36 meeting, and to provide further guidance on how to develop funding for this initiative.

1. In Resolution IX.13, the Contracting Parties urged the Standing Committee, with the assistance of the Ramsar Secretariat, to actively pursue alternative funding mechanisms to resource the Ramsar Small Grants Fund (SGF). They also requested the Standing Committee to bring to COP10 new proposals for establishing a more vigorous mechanism to support the SGF, including the possible development of regional support funds.
2. The Standing Committee addressed this issue during its subsequent 34th and 35th meetings, based on the analysis and proposals provided by the Secretariat in the agenda papers DOC.SC34-19 and DOC.SC35/SG Finance-4. During the 35th meeting, the Standing Committee Subgroup on Finance established a contact group chaired by the USA to develop a concrete proposal. This group sketched out first ideas about establishing a Small Grants Portfolio, to complement the SGF, and submitted them to plenary, as attached in Annex I. This led to Decision SC35-9, in which:

The Standing Committee requested the Subgroup on Finance's contact group on SGF development to refine its proposals for a new Small Grants Portfolio (or similar title) and a new Signature Initiative to be circulated as soon as practicable for SC comment and approval or for discussion at SC36.

3. Project proposals submitted to the SGF in 2006 were regrouped into a trial Small Grants Portfolio and presented to SC35 as an Annex to DOC.SC35/SG Finance-4. After the SC35 meeting, the Secretariat submitted this list of project proposals, ready for execution, to potential project donors whenever they asked about projects in need of funding. This led to the funding by Norway of a project in Armenia, i.e., one of the proposals originally submitted to the 2006 SGF cycle and evaluated by the Secretariat as being ready for execution in 2007, for which no sufficient funds were available in the SGF budget.
4. Based on this encouraging result, and on the deliberations of the contact group, the Secretariat undertook a similar approach during the 2007 funding cycle. In October 2007, it submitted to Standing Committee an evaluation of 18 feasible proposals received. Through intersessional electronic consultation, the members of Standing Committee agreed to fund four of the top-ranked projects (in China, Colombia, Malawi, and Moldova) for which sufficient SGF funds were available. Following this, the Secretariat again submitted a trial

Small Grants Portfolio, composed of the remaining feasible project proposals submitted to the SGF 2007 funding cycle (attached in Annex II) to about seventy potential donor agencies. At the time of writing this document, the Secretariat has received encouraging reactions from some of them, indicating that they may rapidly confirm their wish to fund a number of additional projects.

5. This ongoing development may provide useful information for the further discussion in the contact group, which the Secretariat anticipates will take place during the 36th meeting of Standing Committee, with a view to submitting a worked-out proposal for endorsement by Standing Committee.

ANNEX I

Contact Group of the Subgroup on Finance

- I. A new Small Grants Portfolio (SGP) will complement the Small Grants Fund (SGF). The goal of the SGP is to broaden the current spectrum of potential donors for SGF. The Secretary General has indicated that a different group of donors would be interested in the SGP, so the creation of the SGP would expand the donor base for Ramsar initiatives. The benefits of this expansion outweigh any potential overlap between SGP and SGF.

The SGP would work as follows:

- The grant solicitation and review process will continue as at present.
- In order to facilitate evaluation by interested donors, all projects will be categorized within the following criteria:

Tier 1 (level at which action occurs)

- Regional (two or more countries)
- National
- Local

Tier 2

- Species population / habitat research and monitoring
 - Designation of new Ramsar sites and management & monitoring of Ramsar sites
 - Training
 - CEPA / outreach
 - Planning
 - Networking
 - Livelihoods
- Each proposal should be placed under one category in each tier.
 - At the Standing Committee meeting, the top-ranked projects will be funded by the SGF to the extent of available funds, and all other proposals that have been evaluated as worthy of funding will become the SGP. The SGP can then immediately be used for fundraising until the next grant cycle.
 - To the extent possible, the SGP should seek new donors different from those that support the SGF.
 - It is proposed that Senior Regional Advisors in particular, along with everyone associated with these grants programs, should become better aware of related small grants funds.
 - Consideration should be given to inviting potential donors to the Ramsar regional meetings.
 - Donors should be acknowledged and listed in any project outcomes.
 - Consideration should be given to a more attractive name for the SGP.

- II. Signature Initiatives (SIs) should complement the Small Grants Fund. SI's will be regional in nature and focused on a specific product(s) addressing key priorities identified by the Parties in a region. SI's will be selected and endorsed by a whole region.
- Ideas for the SIs would be initiated at Ramsar regional meetings.
 - It is recommended that each region develop three priority SIs. At the regional meetings, Parties would identify a process for developing funding proposals that can be marketed to potential donors.
 - Consideration should be given to how Ramsar's regional centers might play a role in finding funds for and delivering these initiatives.
 - A role should be sought for National Committees and CEPA to assist in addressing these funding initiatives and other Ramsar funding needs.
 - An assessment should be made of which SIs may already be receiving funds from some source.
 - The Secretariat will manage the process of sending proposals out for fundraising.

ANNEX II

2007 Portfolio of Small Grant Fund Proposals
(a separate PDF document,
http://www.ramsar.org/sc/36/key_sc36_doc24_annex2.pdf)