

REGIONAL INITIATIVE

WEST CENTRAL ASIAN CENTRE

1. Implementation of the Ramsar approach

1.1 Describe briefly how your initiative is promoting the objectives of the Convention and how it is implementing the Ramsar Strategic Plan through cooperation in your region:

The special needs of the countries in the region in terms of training and research to meet the major challenges, including drought and other natural disasters, which have caused serious adverse impacts on wetlands and their dependent species, including water birds, as acknowledged in Resolution VIII.35, is recognized and establishing mechanisms for cooperation and coordination will play a significant role in assisting Contracting Parties in West and Central Asia to fulfill the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 of the Convention;

The RRC-CWA will enhance the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the region through training, research, advocacy and public awareness programmes.

Working to support the implementation activities of contracting parties for the effective management and conservation of wetlands, the objectives of the Center are to -

- Build human capacity and engage in outreach
- Promote scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of knowledge, including traditional knowledge,
- Promote wise use of wetlands through research and sustainable management
- Encourage accession of non contacting parties in the region.

SUBSTANTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE

2. Complete regional adherence and bottom-up approach

2.1 Describe briefly if your initiative is based on a bottom-up approach:

Adoption of Center TOR: The Terms of reference of Center " was revised and adopted during the **Meeting for Preparation and Adoption of the Terms of Reference of the Regional Training and Research Center for Central and West Asia**" which was held on 27-28 February 2005 in coastal city of Ramsar in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

At this meeting Secretary General of the convention and several other internationally known experts and scientists participated, the Terms of Reference of the Ramsar Regional Center for Central and West Asia were finalized and the responsibility was given to the interim secretariat of the Center to follow up the legalization and establishment processes.

Developing Center Strategy: To enable to the Regional Centre to move forward and meet the training and research needs of the region it was agreed that a Strategy and Action Plan for the Centre was required.

To launch the activities of center, and based on Ramsar secretariat suggestion, Islamic republic of Iran decided to develop the draft strategy of center with the help of international consultant. Therefore to finalize the draft strategy and development of regional inputs for the Ramsar Regional Center meeting intended for Developing strategy, the international consultant prepare the **Needs Analysis Questionnaire**.

Center strategy is based on the Terms of Reference developed for the Centre and initial draft strategies produced by the Interim Secretary and the Department of Environment, Iran, together with inputs from a needs analysis questionnaire circulated to stakeholders in the region, a workshop attended by the managers of Ramsar Wetlands in Iran and discussions with key international stakeholders. As far as possible the Strategy is a reflection of the needs of the Region.

The Center strategy was approved by Representatives of Ramsar Secretariat, Governments of I.R. Iran, Tajikistan, Kirgystan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmeinistan, Armenia, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq at a **Meeting of contracting and non contracting parties held in Bandar Abbas, Islamic Republic of Iran, 5th and 6th February 2007**

3- Collaborative Management Board Meeting

The Center made up of the following bodies:

- A. The Collaborative Management Board
- B. The Secretariat

First Collaborative Management Board Meeting 31 May 2007 held in Center office in Ramsar city. Representatives of Government of I.R. Iran, Ramsar Senior Advisor for Asia Pacific, Islamic Republic of Azerbaijan, UNESCO, Mazandaran Province and Coordinator of Ramsar Regional Center were participate in this meeting and Strategy, Budget and Work plan of this center was finalized by Meeting. Also First Executive Director of the center elected by the member of CMB in this one-day meeting. Yemen (As representative of west Asian countries) and one of the IOPs was supposed to attend to this meeting but unfortunately they couldn't manage to participate in CMB meeting.

2.2 List the countries in the region that your initiative covers:

Contracting Parties: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, I.R Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Syria, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
Non-Contracting Parties: Afghanistan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan

2.3 Specify those countries in your region that do not participate in the initiative (if any):

No response from: Kuwait, Oman, Qatar

3. Active involvement of all relevant stakeholders

3.1 List the participants in your initiative and their affiliation:

3.2 Indicate if only Ramsar Administrative Authorities at national level or also other relevant stakeholders (including other ministries, intergovernmental bodies, NGOs, academia and economic actors) are actively involved:

The Centre will work to meet the wetland training and research needs of the Ramsar Convention in the Central and West Asia Region as defined by the Ramsar Secretariat. The countries in this Region are listed above. The Centre will also seek to work with other contracting and non contracting parties in all activities and in particular to learn from the countries with special experience in wetland conservation and wise use.

The main target groups for the Centre are those people and organisations that -

- work in wetland management and conservation at all levels, and especially those connected with Ramsar designated wetlands
- Through their direct or indirect use of wetland resources and have an impact on the overall integrity of wetlands.

The specific target groups are listed below. The Centre will work at the international, regional and national levels but will focus on actions that have a regional scale impact and in particular

will work with people that can have a significant impact on the management and wise use of wetlands in their countries.

Key Target Groups and Stakeholders

International and Regional Level: International Organisations, Regional Organisations, Scientific/Academic communities, Conservation Groups/Organisations/ Societies, Concerned Governments, Donors, Media, NGOs, Regional Projects

National Level: National Government Agencies and Ministries and especially Ramsar Focal points, Policy Makers, Media, Universities, Research Institutions, NGO Focal Points and NGOs generally, Potential Donors

Site Level: Local Government (Relevant Agencies), Wetland Managers and Staff, Local Religious Leaders, Municipalities, Media, Education Authorities, Schools (Teachers and Students), Businesses, Agricultural (Farmers and Cooperatives), Fisheries (Individuals and Cooperatives), Hunters and Hunting organizations, General Public, Tourists, NGOs, Community Based Organisation, Law Enforcement Agencies

Since center started its work recently, National focal point of Ramsar was involved in its activities and unfortunately other stockholders are not founded yet. There are a lot of potential active stakeholders in this region which we hope center will involve them in its future activities.

4. Development of collaboration based on commonly agreed terms

4.1 Describe briefly how your regional network or centre is operating (attach the terms of reference (or other agreements) elaborated to guide its activities as separate documents where they exist):

A term of reference of the Center is attached and it fully describes the operation of the center.

5. Involvement of other regional partners

5.1 List relevant intergovernmental or international organizations operating in your region:

WWF, Birdlife International, IUCN-West and Central Asia Office, UNDP/GEF project (Kazakhstan ,Turkmenistan and Iran), JICA Office, Iran, British Council

5.2 List those with which you have established common activities:

5.3 List your activities in common:

IUCN-West and Central Asia Office: two bodies agreed to establish network on training programs and public awareness activities, also recently this organization asked center to coordinate some of their meetings that related to Ramsar Convention.

Bird Life International-West Asia: work on Wings over Wetlands (WOW) project and also agreed establishment of network on training programs, also center agreed to host one of the Board meeting of this project

UNDP/GEF project Iran: there are two projects on wetlands: “Development of a Wetland Site and Flyway Network for Conservation of the Siberian Crane and Other Water birds in Asia” and “conservation of Iranian wetlands”, The Parties cooperate in the sphere of wetland ecosystem and biological diversity conservation as well as their training activities on the basis of reciprocity.

UNDP/ GEF Kazakhstan: working to develop training workshop on Wetlands Inventory for Central Asia in Russian Language

UNDP/GEF Turkmenistan: working on Building capacity on water bird Census

British Council Iran: Support several training workshop and meeting of Center

6. Scientific and technical backing

6.1 List the scientific and technical partners that provide a solid backing to your initiative:

Due to subject of training programs, potential scientific and technical partners will be chosen

7. Targets of the initiative and their links with Ramsar

7.1 List your initiative's strategic and operational targets for the period 2009-2011:

7.2 Specify the relations of these targets to the objectives of the draft Ramsar Strategic Plan (attach your work plan for 2009-2011, or for 2009, where it exists):

The general targets of the Centre are: Capacity Building, Networking and Communication, Public Awareness and Education, Study and Research.

These four general targets are reflected in six specific targets. These targets have been developed as a result extensive discussion and each is based on clearly identified rationale. The specific objectives of the Centre shall be to -

1. Ensure that the major stakeholders involved in wetland management have the knowledge, skills and ability needed to effectively conserve wetlands and promote their wise use.
 2. Enhance communication, cooperation and networking to allow the effective dissemination of knowledge and information and sharing of experience.
 3. Improve the conservation and wise use of wetlands through facilitation and promotion of appropriate research programmes.
 4. Raise the awareness of key stakeholders about the importance of conservation and wise use of wetlands and promote public participation in wetland management.
 5. Encourage the accession of non contracting parties of the region to the Ramsar Convention.
 6. Develop the structures and capacities to build an active, robust and viable Centre.
- More details are available in Center Strategy and action plan which will be attached to this report.

8. Raising awareness of Ramsar objectives

8.1 Describe briefly your activities in the fields of communication, education, and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders:

8.2 Describe briefly the increased support for Ramsar objectives resulting from these activities (this information may be used by Ramsar's CEPA Oversight Panel, according to Standing Committee Decision 35-14):

According to the Regional Strengthening Needs Assessment, there is little knowledge about wetland management and the Ramsar Convention among the population that is not directly involved on these issues, a lack that affects wetland conservation in the region. Participants in the assessment suggested diverse activities of communication, promotion and outreach to raise public awareness. Environmental education pertaining wetlands and their conservation was identified among the main priorities. To fill this gap, the Plan will include the CEPA as one of it's strengthening tools as it has proven effective in European and English speaking countries. CEPA was conceived as a supporting, advisory and exchange tool for teachers and other

professionals dedicated to environmental awareness and education activities who often find themselves isolated in their educational institutions and daily tasks, leaving them with little time to establish contacts with their peers elsewhere and share knowledge and experiences to deliver solutions. During the implementation of the Plan, RRC-CWA will adapt CEPA to conditions in the Western and Central Asia both in terms of language and culture, so that its content, tools and materials are adopted both locally and regionally.

Local communities in general (landowners, indigenous peoples, rural communities, media staff, community-based organizations), government institutions (focal points, environmental and education agencies, Ramsar site managers, wetland committees, local government authorities, environmental planners, educators, diplomatic representations), international organizations (regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral); business sector, organizations and entrepreneurs, civil society organizations (civil organization networks and alliances, libraries, educators, NGOs, research centers), etc.

Arabic and Russian are two main languages in this region so providing RRC-CWA websites and other environmental education materials and tools for CEPA's *activities in three main languages, Arabic, Russian and English is the most important activities that this center has planning for.* Through the Internet, e-list (mailing list) and other direct contacts, RRC-CWA will identify new materials in the region that will be made available through RRC-CWA website, including a brief description of all materials so that interested individuals and institutions may have easier access.

RRC-CWA will also take advantage of regional meetings, events and other activities. RRC-CWA will conduct training activities to encourage information exchange at the regional level, including training workshops, fora, seminars and conferences in which government authorities and NGO will play a major role.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT FOR THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE

9. Who provides political and financial support?

9.1 List all your sources and the amounts of financial support for the triennium 2009-2011. Specify the amounts which are already confirmed:

Government of Islamic Republic Of Iran for 2009: 140,000CHF and this amount with 5% increase in each year will be allocated for 2010-2011, Ramsar Core Budget:?, British council Iran:?

Countries Contribution: Not Decided yet but it is essential and will be decided in next CMB meeting

* The budget of the center is based on center action plan and Collaborative management board will adopt it. Action plan for 2008-2009 was adopted during first CMB meeting. Second collaborative management board which will be held in early 2009 will estimate the budget for 2010-2011. However, the assumption is 5% increase in each year.

9.2 List your sources and amounts of financial support for the year 2009. Specify the amounts which are already confirmed:

Government of Islamic Republic Of Iran for 2009: 140,000CHF Ramsar Core Budget:?, British council Iran:?, Doners contributions: ?

9.3 List concisely, according to main budget lines, your expenditures planned for 2009:

Estimated Expenses for 2008-2009 (EURO):

1. Ensure that key stakeholders involved in wetland management have the knowledge, skills and ability needed to effectively conserve wetlands and promote their wise use Estimated Budget: 25000
2. Enhance communication, cooperation and networking to allow the effective dissemination of knowledge and information and sharing of experience Estimated Budget: 10000
3. Improve the conservation and wise use of wetlands through facilitation and promotion of appropriate research programmes Estimated Budget: 25000
4. Raise the awareness of key stakeholders about the importance of effective conservation and wise use of wetlands and promote public participation in wetland management. Estimated Budget: 27000
5. Encourage the accession of non contracting parties of the region to the Ramsar Convention Estimated Budget: 8000
6. Develop the structures and capacities to build an active, robust and viable Centre. Estimated Budget: 114000
7. Office costs (General expense/utilities, Communications, Purchase/maintenance of equipment, Posters, leaflet, newsletter, Insurance) Estimated Budget: 90000

Total Budget: 299,000 EURO 481,157 CHF

Estimated expenses for 2008: 240,000 CHF

Estimated expenses for 2009: 242,000 CHF

10. Financial planning

10.1 Summarize your remaining funding needs for 2009 that are not yet covered by confirmed donations, according to the main budget lines used above:

Estimated expenses for 2009: 242,000 CHF

Government of Iran: 140,000 CHF

Other Resources: 102,000 CHF

10.2 Provide information about your fundraising plan to cover such outstanding needs:

The financial and management systems are set out in the Terms of Reference for the Centre. The members and responsibilities of the Collaborative Management Board and Executive Director are set out in Center TOR.

Financial support is essential to enable the effective functioning of the Centre. Currently this comes from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Ramsar Secretariat. In the future, funding of the activities of the Centre should also come from -

- National sources of income from countries in region as appropriate
- Income generating activities
- National, regional and international grants.
- Sponsorship of activities by appropriate commercial and private supporters.

The Terms of Reference state that a Trust Fund will be established to meet the expenditures of the Centre and that the Collaborative Management Board should decide on the budget lines and biannual expenditure

The activities of the Centre will be directed and coordinated by the bodies and people listed in the Terms of Reference for the Centre. Within the scope of first five year strategic plan it is not intended that the Centre itself employ full time experts in areas related to the planned activities such as CEPA, Monitoring, but that it uses the experts from the region to deliver the action plan. It is the responsibility of the Collaborative Management Board to ensure that the Centre is resourced in a way that ensures it can undertake the effective delivery of the strategy.

11. Request for Ramsar core budget support

11.1 If you request a financial contribution from the Ramsar core budget, specify the amount for 2009, and for the triennium 2009-2011:

Estimated expenses for 2009: 242,000 CHF

Ramsar Core Budget: 70,000 CHF

Government of Iran: 140,000 CHF

Other Resources: 30,000 CHF

Budget request from Ramsar Core Budget for triennium 2009-2011: 210,000 CHF

* Regard to financial pressure which countries especially in central Asia are faced with and also large number of Non contracting parties are existing in this region center can not count on countries contribution so at least for this triennium for running the center support from core budget is essential for center survival.

GOVERNANCE OF THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE

12. Governance mechanisms in place

12.1 Describe the governance and advisory mechanisms and structures (e.g., committees) in place or to be established to provide guidance and insight to your initiative (attach terms of references, rules of procedures, or operational guidelines, where such exist):

Administrative bodies of the Center:

The Center will be made up of the following bodies:

C. The Collaborative Management Board

D. The Secretariat

The Collaborative Management Board is formed initially of the following members will administer the Center.

- A representative of the Iranian Government, who will act as the chair. The representative of the government on the Management Board will be the Head of the Department of the Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or whoever he/she designates for the purpose;
- One representative from the West Asia contracting parties and one representative from the Central Asia contracting parties selected by the sub regional countries on a rotating basis.
- One representative of the Ramsar Secretariat;
- One representative from UNESCO through the National Commission of UNESCO
- One representative from the UNEP or UNDP country office.
- One representative of DoE Mazandaran.
- Executive Director of the Centre as ex-officio member who will also serve as a secretary to the Board.
- Observers
 - Ramsar IOP's,
 - Donor countries and funding organisations
 - Other interested countries
 - One representative of Institutions
 - One representative of NGOs

More details are available in Attached TOR.

13. Coordination with the Ramsar Secretariat

13.1 Specify the established or anticipated operational arrangements between the governance structures of your initiative and the Ramsar Secretariat:

- The Secretariat of Ramsar Convention will contribute to the work of the Center as it is authorized to do so including:

- The provision of technical and administrative assistance for the organization of the CENTER;
 - The provision of assistance for developing contacts with donors and for preparing projects for submission to donors;
 - The provision of technical and financial assistance, resources permitting, for the preparation and publication of documents concerning the CENTER and its objectives, as well as information produced by the CENTER;
- The provision of assistance of any other type identified by the signatories to this Convention.

13.2 List the full name, telephone and e-mail contact of the main focal point of your initiative:

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