

Agenda item 9

Regional initiatives 2009-2012 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Action requested: Standing Committee is invited to take note of the update on progress with work of the 17 Regional Initiatives it endorsed during its 40th meeting (May 2009) as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2009-2012. The current situation (March 2010) includes two inactive Initiatives on hold (Pacific Islands, Himalayan), one Initiative still under development (West African Coast), three Initiatives provisionally endorsed for 2009 and now ready for full endorsement (Black Sea Coast, Caribbean, American Mangroves), and eleven operational Initiatives already fully endorsed in 2009 (Carpathian, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, High Andean Wetland Strategy, La Plata River Basin, Mediterranean, Nile River Basin, Nordic-Baltic, Ramsar Centres for Eastern Asia, the Western Hemisphere, Eastern Africa and for Central and Western Asia).

Standing Committee is invited to adopt an improved “Combined format for annual reporting and forward planning” by the Regional Initiatives, as attached in Annex I. This is to replace the annual reporting format adopted through Decision SC40-16, because the latter only covers annual reporting (on past activities and expenditures) while not addressing forward planning (activities and finance needs) for the coming year.

Standing Committee is invited to welcome the model contract in Annex II, used by the Secretariat to disburse annual Ramsar core budget allocations to Regional Initiatives, and specifying the reporting requirements.

Standing Committee is invited to allocate Ramsar core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for 2010 as outlined in the table in paragraph XX, and to approve the accrual of any unallocated funds for allocation under the same budget line for the year 2011 during its 42nd meeting.

Introduction

1. During its 40th meeting (May 2009), Standing Committee recognized 17 Regional Initiatives as operating in the framework of the Convention during the period leading up to COP11 (2009-2012) and took a number of decisions to facilitate their operations and regular reporting, as requested through Resolution X.6 adopted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10).
2. To facilitate the endorsement of Regional Initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention, SC40 adopted “Evaluation Criteria” (Decision SC40-15) and a “Format for annual financial and work plan reporting”, to be used by Regional Initiatives when reporting annually to the Secretariat (Decision SC40-16).

3. This document summarizes progress of the work reported by the Initiatives endorsed by SC40, during the year 2009 and including activities up to March 2010. It provides an update on the current status of the Initiatives, reports on the funding requests for 2010 received by a number of them, and includes a proposal for how to allocate available Ramsar 2010 core budget funds.

Current status of the Regional Initiatives endorsed by Standing Committee

4. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the current status of the 17 Regional Initiatives endorsed by Standing Committee in 2009, according to the specific points listed in its Decision SC40-18:

Initiatives under development

5. Standing Committee “recognized two Initiatives as under development and encouraged them to submit full proposals for SC41: Pacific Islands, West African Coastal Zone (WacoWet)”.
6. With regard to the Pacific Islands, the Secretariat has been informed that no further activities have been undertaken to develop a Regional Initiative for this area. Therefore, it is suggested that this Initiative no longer be considered as being under development, but rather as being on hold.
7. Additional Ramsar core budget funding was allocated for 2009 to the Initiative for the West African Coastal Zone, in continuation of annual funding allocated by COP9 and by subsequent Standing Committee meetings. According to established practice, the Secretariat drew up a contract with the coordinating body of the Initiative and transferred a first installment of 10,200 CHF, i.e. 60% of the allocated 17,000 CHF for activities in 2009. A report on progress with work in 2009 was received and is available on the Ramsar website. The report does not list expenditures beyond the first Ramsar installment, nor does it include a work and finance plan for 2010. The Secretariat has accrued the remainder of the 2009 Ramsar funding allocation (6,800 CHF) for disbursement to cover possible activities in 2010, once the missing information on planned work and finance needs for 2010 is available.

Initiatives endorsed provisionally for 2009

8. Standing Committee “endorsed the following Initiatives provisionally for one year (with eligibility for support) and urged them to submit full proposals for SC41 and possible full endorsement for the rest of the COP cycle until 2012: Black Sea Coast Initiative, Caribbean Subregional Strategy, Mangrove Ecosystems in the Americas”.
9. The Secretariat has received information from all three Initiatives, showing that they were substantially developed during the year 2009 and that they now fully meet the Operational Guidelines adopted through Resolution X.6. Progress reports are available on the Ramsar website: http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-standing-reg-init-rpts/main/ramsar/1-31-41^24529_4000_0. It is proposed that Standing Committee now fully endorse these three Initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention for the remainder of the period 2009-2012.

Initiatives endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention 2009-2012

10. Standing Committee also endorsed twelve additional Regional Initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention in the period leading up to COP11. For two of them, the Decision specified particular conditions for this endorsement:
11. The Himalayan Wetlands Initiative was endorsed “on condition that agreement is reached on outstanding points among all countries participating – currently China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – money to be withheld until that time”. The Secretariat understands that such an agreement has not been reached. No Ramsar core budget funding was therefore disbursed (SC40 allocated provisionally 25,000 CHF). Given this situation, it is suggested to consider this Initiative as being under development until an agreement will be reached on the outstanding points. The Secretariat has accrued the 2009 funding allocation, and has added it to the 2010 Ramsar core budget funding line for Regional Initiatives.
12. The Ramsar Regional Center for Central and Western Asia (RRC-CWA), located in the town of Ramsar in the Islamic Republic of Iran, fulfilled the conditions for disbursement of the Ramsar core budget allocation spelt out by Decision SC40-18, as it provided further information on its activities in 2008 to the Secretariat and undertook new activities in 2009, in part with support from and participation by the Secretariat. The center gratefully received its Ramsar core budget allocation for 2009 of 35,000 CHF and reported on its activities.
13. The remaining ten Initiatives were endorsed without provisions. Six of them did not request financial support from the Ramsar core budget for activities in 2009, notably the Initiatives for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, La Plata River Basin, Mediterranean (MedWet), Nile River Basin, Nordic-Baltic Region, and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Asia in the Republic of Korea. Reports on progress with their work in 2009 and plans for 2010 are available on the Ramsar website.
14. The remaining four Initiatives received Ramsar core budget funding support for their activities in 2009. They reported on progress with their work and on their plans and further funding needs for 2010, and these reports are available on the Ramsar website as well. The High Andean Wetland Strategy progressed according to plan and reported to have fully used up funding received in 2009. This was also the case for the Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama. In this case however, Ramsar funds allocated by SC40 for 2009 have not been disbursed (23,643 CHF). The Secretariat is waiting for the documents necessary for the transfer (signed contract, invoice and bank details).
15. The Carpathian Wetland Initiative and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa in Kampala received and used only the first installment for 2009, corresponding to 60 per cent of the amount allocated by SC40. The Secretariat has accrued the remaining amounts to their respective budgets for 2010.

Update on additional initiatives

16. Two additional initiatives were endorsed as operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during 2006-2008: ChadWet and NigerWet. In 2009, they were unable to submit progress reports and work proposals. Despite the absence of such materials, Decision SC40-19 noted that “Recognizing the importance of the ChadWet and NigerWet Initiatives in the Africa region and bearing in mind their transition period, the Standing Committee encouraged those Initiatives to submit updated information for potential approval at the next SC meeting.” Since SC40, the Secretariat has not received any further information on these initiatives.

Annual reporting and planning needs

17. The summary above shows significant progress with the development of most Ramsar Regional Initiatives. Fifteen out of the 17 endorsed Initiatives progressed well during 2009. However, their lasting development, responding fully to the Operational Guidelines adopted by COP10 (through Resolution X.6), is a time consuming process, and many specific challenges remain.
18. Furthermore, throughout the year 2009, communication between the coordinating bodies of the Regional Initiatives endorsed by SC40 and the Ramsar Secretariat was not in all cases sufficiently regular. In order to submit to Standing Committee accurate, concise and clear information on progress with the work and forward planning, both technically and financially, timely reporting, according to a simple and straightforward format, is essential. The annual reporting format adopted by SC40 in May 2009 provides such a format, but only for reporting on past activities – it is missing a planning part for the year ahead. Neither does the format include a field to indicate future funding requests.
19. In order to overcome this gap, and to facilitate annual reporting in future, the Secretariat proposes that Standing Committee adopt the attached combined format for annual reporting and forward planning (cf. Annex I). In order to be considered by Standing Committee, such annual reports will need to be submitted to the Secretariat at least two months before the date of the upcoming annual meeting of Standing Committee.
20. Ramsar core budget funding allocations are decided on an annual basis by Standing Committee. Subsequent to these decisions, the Secretariat draws up specific contracts with the coordinating bodies of Regional Initiatives, according to the model attached in Annex II, regulating the disbursement of the funds. This procedure is most efficient for timely reporting and disbursement of the funds and thus makes the work of the Initiatives most effective. Standing Committee is invited to adopt the annual reporting and planning format, as well as the model contract for further reference and use.

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funding to Regional Initiatives for 2010

21. Not all Ramsar core budget funds allocated by SC40 for the activities of Regional Initiatives in 2009 were disbursed. As the Himalayan Wetlands Initiative did not develop to the point to fulfill the provision for funding, no disbursement was made. The Secretariat has accrued the funding allocated to this Initiative for 2009, but not disbursed (25,000 CHF), to the overall budget available for Regional Initiatives in 2010.
22. Five Initiatives (West African Coast, Center for Central and Western Asia in Ramsar, Black Sea Coast, Carpathian, Centre for Eastern Africa in Kampala) reported that they did not

use up all funds allocated from the Ramsar core budget and other sources for their activities in 2009. In their financial plans, they accrued the remaining amounts to contribute to cover the costs of their activities in 2010 – these accrued amounts have been taken into account as income for 2010. The accrued amounts figure in the table below in the column “left over from 2009” and are carried forward to 2010. Requests for funding from the Ramsar core budget for 2010 are listed in the column “Ramsar request for 2010”. These requests are in addition to the amounts left over from 2009. And the finance plans for 2010, submitted by the Initiatives requesting Ramsar funds, take into account both types of funds: left overs from 2009 and new, additional needs for 2010.

23. The table summarizes Ramsar core funding received in the past by individual Initiatives (up to and including the full allocations for 2009) and the funding requested by them for 2010. It also provides a proposal on how to allocate available funds among the Initiatives for their activities in 2010. All amounts are given in Swiss Francs (CHF). For ease of calculation, where financial plans were not submitted in CHF (or with the indication of an exchange rate), simplified exchange rates were used for US Dollars (USD) and Euros (EUR): 1.06 CHF/USD, 1.5 CHF/EUR.

regional initiative (all amounts in CHF)	left over from 2009	total budget 2010	Ramsar request for 2010	allocation proposal for 2010	total Ramsar funding in the past ²
i) networks					
High Andean	nil	460,000	22,000	22,000	86,000
West African Coast	6,800	not known	none	nil	137,700
Carpathian	13,847	114,150	37,500	¹ 37,500	37,500
Caribbean	nil	246,000	32,000	32,000	25,000
American mangroves	nil	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
La Plata river basin	nil	44,000	20,000	20,000	none
Black Sea Coast	29,819	53,000	none	¹ nil	44,690
total for networks			136,500	136,500	
ii) centers					
CREHO - Panama	³ 23,643	233,000	23,643	¹ 23,643	183,643
RRC-CWA - Ramsar	97,000	313,000	60,000	¹ 60,000	160,000
RAMCEA - Kampala	30,543	245,000	40,000	¹ 40,000	76,357
total for centers			123,643	123,643	
Totals			260,143	260,143	

¹ The proposed 2010 allocation takes into account left overs from 2009 and expresses additional needs. For details cf. the individual plans for 2010.

² Up to and including the total allocation for 2009.

³ Reported as being spent in 2009, but not yet reimbursed by the Secretariat, cf. paragraph XX above.

24. The Ramsar core budget line “C. Support to regional initiatives” shows an annual allocation of 279,190 CHF for the years 2009-2012. The cumulated funding requests for Regional Initiatives in 2010 received by the Secretariat (260,143 CHF) therefore fall within the overall amount available in the Ramsar core budget. In addition, this amount is currently increased by the accrued 25,000 CHF allocated in 2009 to the Himalayan Initiative that did not materialize (cf. above). Therefore, the total available sum for allocation to Regional Initiatives in 2010 amounts to 304,190 CHF.

25. The annual budget line for Regional Initiatives is subdivided into “i) regional networks (cooperation)”, with 179,190 CHF, and “ii) regional centers (training & capacity-building)”, with 100,000 CHF. For 2010, the funding requests for regional networks are lower than the amount available (136,500 CHF or 76%), while the requests for three regional centers overshoot the budget line (123,643 CHF or 124%). However, the overall sum of all funding requests for 2010 (260,143 CHF) still amounts to less (86%) than the money available. It is therefore suggested that Standing Committee allocates the requested funds as outlined in the table above.
26. Furthermore, it is suggested to accrue unallocated funds to the 2011 Ramsar core budget line “C. Support to regional initiatives” in anticipation of possibly increased funding requests by early 2011. Should this not be the case in one year’s time, during its 42nd meeting Standing Committee may wish to allocate surplus moneys in early 2011, for example, to projects in the Ramsar Small Grants Fund Portfolio, because this well established Ramsar implementation support mechanism is chronically in dire need of funding support.
27. Resolution X.2 on Financial and budgetary matters adopted by COP10 in 2008 “REQUESTS the Contracting Parties to support, through voluntary contributions, the Ramsar Regional Centre for Central and West Asia celebrations of the 40th Anniversary of the signing of the Convention, planned for 2011 in the town of Ramsar” (paragraph 22), and “GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES that the countries of Africa assessed [...] at less than CHF 2000 have agreed to increase their payments to that level. The difference between CHF 2000 and their assessment will be in the form of a voluntary contribution specifically earmarked for African Regional Initiatives” (paragraph 23). To date, the Secretariat has received 5,000 CHF earmarked for expenditure on African Regional Initiatives. In light of the surplus core budget funding available for 2010, the Secretariat proposes to accrue this amount for a further year. The Secretariat will include this amount, plus any further 2010 voluntary receipts according to the paragraphs of Resolution X.2 above, to the total 2011 allocation for Regional Initiatives.

Annex I

Combined annual reporting and forward planning format

Annual Summary Report for Year X and Plan for Year X+1 (4 pages maximum)

1. Title of your Regional Initiative:

2. Work and activities undertaken during Year X

Provide a simple summary on your work undertaken by listing your activities, the results achieved and your indicators of success according to the format below:

objectives	activities	results/outputs	indicators
1. objective one	1.1 activity undertaken	achievements	verification of success
	1.2 activity undertaken		
2. objective two			

If felt useful, you may add narrative text to specify further your achievements, improvement of Ramsar implementation in the region, etc.

3. Financial report for Year X

Provide a summary of income and expenditures. If you use another currency than Swiss Franc (CHF), please provide an average **exchange rate to the CHF**:

activities	planned expenditures	real expenditures
1.1 activity	amount (currency)	amount (currency)
1.2 activity		
total		

sources of income (donors)	income received
donor name	amount (currency)
Ramsar core budget (where applicable)	amount (currency)
total	

Financial balance on 31 December of Year X: amount left to be carried over to Year X+1, or deficit

4. Work and activities planned for Year X+1

Provide a simple summary of your planned work, by listing your activities, their anticipated results and your indicators of success according to the format below:

objectives	activities	results/outputs	indicators
1. objective one	1.1 activity to be undertaken	expected achievements	verification of success
	1.2 activity ...		
2. objective two			

5. Financial plan for the year X+1

Provide a summary of expected income and budgeted/planned expenditures. If you use another currency than Swiss Franc (CHF), please provide an average **exchange rate to the CHF**:

activities	planned expenditures	expected income and source
1.1 activity	amount (currency)	amount (currency) and donor name
1.2 activity		
total		

Annex II

Model contract to disburse allocated Ramsar core budget funds to Regional Initiatives

Beneficiary address

Regional Initiative coordinating body

Date

Re: **Ramsar Regional Initiatives 2009-2012**
Ramsar Contract No. XXX

With reference to the Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives adopted with Resolution X.6 at the 10th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands and attached as Annex I, and in accordance with Decision SC XX-XX of the XXth Meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee in MONTH YEAR, the **XX Initiative** has been evaluated as fully meeting the Regional Initiative Operational Guidelines and is approved as operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention during the period 2009-2012.

In order to retain the status of Ramsar Regional Initiative you are required to report to the Secretariat, annually, in the format attached, as approved by SC41. YEAR final reporting is required by DATE the latest.

This status makes your initiative eligible for funding in any year during the 2009-2012 period. Funding decisions are made annually, based on funding requests made by all approved Regional Initiatives, by the Standing Committee. For YEAR your initiative has been allocated funding from the Ramsar core budget of CHF XXX.

We are pleased to offer the XX Initiative the following YEAR contract for CHF XXX, to perform the specific tasks itemized in the funding request received from you by the Secretariat (as published on the Ramsar website among the SCXX Agenda papers).

The contract will cover a period of XX months, starting on **DATE** and terminating upon satisfactory and timely completion of all tasks to be undertaken, but not later than **DATE** unless the contract is otherwise extended or terminated in accordance with normal Swiss contract law. The following terms will apply to the use of the funds allocated under this contract:

1. The sum of **CHF XXX**, representing 60% per cent of the approved sum, will be transferred after receipt by the Ramsar Secretariat of the countersigned copy of this letter, including bank details and an invoice for this amount.
2. A final sum of **CHF XXX**, representing 40% of the approved sum, will be transferred upon acceptance by the Secretariat of an interim progress report. This must be sent to the Secretariat, in the format shown in Annex II, no later than DATE, together with an invoice.
3. Under Swiss Law an **invoice** is required to support each payment in 1 and 2 above. The invoice should state the name of your organization, date, amount, bank name and address, account name/beneficiary, IBAN or account number and SWIFT code.
4. Under the Secretariat's contractual terms, contract funds and income earned thereon may be expended only for the **purposes** stated in the present letter, and it is understood that these funds will be used for such purposes in accordance with the funding request.

5. Any **funds unused** by the end of the contractual period must be declared in the YEAR final reporting, due to the Secretariat by DATE, and shall be returned to the Secretariat.
6. All the conditions described in the Regional Initiative **Operational Guidelines** (Annex I) apply to this contract.
7. The Ramsar Secretariat may include **information** on this contract in its periodic reports and may also refer to it in a press release.
8. This agreement is governed by Swiss law.

All correspondence in connection with this contract should be addressed to NAME (XXX@ramsar.org) at the above address.

If you agree to the above, kindly confirm your agreement with the contents of this letter by countersigning and initialing each page of the enclosed duplicate copy and returning the complete document to the Ramsar Secretariat.

We wish you continued success in your endeavours over the coming months and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

NAME
Secretary General

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO:

I have understood and agree with the terms and conditions set out in the preceding pages.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

PAYMENT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Full name of bank and/or branch:

Address of bank and/or branch:

Account name / beneficiary:

Account number - IBAN:

SWIFTCODE