

Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention 2013-2015

Action requested: The Standing Committee was entrusted by the Conference of the Parties to endorse and supervise annually the progress of the work of the Regional Initiatives operating under the Convention. At this meeting, the Standing Committee is invited to:

- 1) review and ADOPT the revised “Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands”, attached in Annex 1;
- 2) ENDORSE the 15 Regional Initiatives listed in paragraph 6 as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 and operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during 2013;
- 3) TAKE NOTE of the analysis of the priority issues addressed in paragraphs 7-14; to REQUEST the Initiatives concerned to report on the solutions of these points in their annual report to be submitted in time for the 47th meeting of Standing Committee (SC47) in early 2014; and to make its ENDORSEMENT of the Regional Initiatives, as fully meeting the 2013-2015 Operational Guidelines and operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during the period 2013-2015, conditional on their satisfactory reporting on the above points in time for SC47; and
- 4) ALLOCATE from the Ramsar core budget 2013, line “D. Support to Regional Initiative networks and centres” (Annex I of Resolution XI.2), 129,719 CHF to the following six Initiatives, as requested for their activities in 2013:

East African centre	35,000 CHF
Niger river basin network	30,000 CHF
La Plata river basin network	16,700 CHF
Caribbean network	15,000 CHF
American mangroves and reefs network	20,000 CHF
Carpathian Wetland Initiative	13,019 CHF

Introduction

1. Cooperation at regional level was recognized by Ramsar in 1999 as an effective means to promote and better implement the objectives of the Convention, and was addressed by the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP7) through the adoption of Resolution VII.19 providing guidelines for international cooperation, Resolution VII.22 on a collaborative structure for the Mediterranean, and Resolution VII.26 on the creation of a regional centre for training and research in the Western Hemisphere. This triggered the establishment and development of formally established ways of regional cooperation which are since referred to as “Regional Initiatives”. They come in two forms of regional

cooperation between different countries at international level: either with the support of physically established *centres* for regional training and capacity building, or through *networks* that operate to facilitate regional cooperation.

2. In order to be formally recognized as operating under the Ramsar Convention, a Regional Initiative has to conform to specific guidelines. The original guidelines adopted through Resolution VII.19 in 1999 were regularly updated until 2008, when COP10 adopted “Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands” through Resolution X.6.
3. Subsequently, Resolution XI.5 of 2012 states that COP11 “APPROVES the continued validity and use of these Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, as adopted for 2009-2012 and annexed to Resolution X.6, for the period 2013 to 2015” (Resolution XI.5, para. 8), and “INSTRUCTS the Standing Committee to revise the guidelines in such a manner that a precise evaluation of their activities and their administrative and financial management and long-term sustainability is possible and to use these new guidelines to determine the level of support (financial or otherwise) in the coming triennium” (Resolution XI.5, para. 11).

Revised Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

4. The Secretariat has revised the Operational Guidelines for the period 2013-2015, which are attached in Annex 1. The revision is based on specific issues clarified through Resolution XI.5, and in particular on the recommendations of the review and summary report submitted to COP11 on “Progress and issues concerning Regional Initiatives operating within the framework of the Convention” (COP11 DOC.13). It focuses on the priority issues that merit urgent attention by Parties and the Secretariat, as they were specified in paragraphs 32-37 of the review document submitted to COP11.
5. The proposed Operational Guidelines for 2013-2015 in Annex 1 are based on the text of those adopted by COP10 for the period 2009-2012. For the ease of comparison, any new or changed text is marked in **bold** in Annex 1 (once adopted, the boldening will be removed). Changes and additions cover the points addressed in the review referred to above, as well as in a questionnaire addressing these points that was sent to all Initiatives in January 2013. Some of the points figure already in the earlier guidelines, but are now made more prominent; in some cases this is done by splitting a list of tasks formerly listed in one single paragraph into several distinct paragraphs.

Action requested 1: The Standing Committee is invited to review and adopt the revised Operational Guidelines for the period 2013-2015, as attached in Annex 1.

Endorsement of Regional Initiatives that fully meet the Operational Guidelines as operating under the Ramsar Convention during the period 2013-2015

6. The fifteen Regional Initiatives listed below have submitted annual reports of progress with work in 2012, work plans for 2013, and additional information in response to the questionnaire sent out in January. Their annual reports, in PDF format, can be found at <http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-documents-standing-sc46-inits/main/ramsar/1->

[31-41%5E26107_4000_0](#). These Initiatives fully meet the 2009-2012 Operational Guidelines and conform to a significant extent with the revised Operational Guidelines, proposed for 2013-2015.

Four regional centres are active for training and capacity building in:

- East Africa (established in Kampala),
- the Western Hemisphere (Panama),
- Central and West Asia (Ramsar),
- East Asia (Changwon).

Eleven networks are active for regional cooperation:

- along the West African coast,
- in the Niger river basin,
- in the High Andean region,
- in the La Plata river basin,
- in the Caribbean,
- on American mangroves and reefs,
- along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway,
- in the Mediterranean,
- in the Carpathian region,
- in the Nordic-Baltic region, and
- along the Black and Azov Sea coasts.

7. The review of their annual reports shows that each of these Initiatives needs to make better use of and increased reference to the Ramsar tools during its programme of work. Ramsar operational tools are made available in the Ramsar Handbooks, Technical Reports and Briefing Notes. The Initiatives also need to include a brief mention of how this is achieved, and its outcomes, in their annual reporting.
8. All Regional Initiatives also need to include into their programme of work reference to the ongoing work of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the cooperation with and active input by the designated national focal points for the work areas of STRP and CEPA, i.e., the Convention's programme on Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness.
9. The analysis of the responses to the questionnaire sent out to all Regional Initiatives in January 2013 further reveals the deficiencies summarized in Table 1 below.
10. Three Initiatives still lack formal support and participation by all countries concerned (table column "*letters of support*").
11. A practical indicator of the role a Regional Initiative can play for increasing implementation of Ramsar objectives in the region is whether the Initiative has established its own identity or not, e.g., illustrated through a specific logo, used in conjunction with the Ramsar logo. The establishment and regular updating of a specific website, as an effective means of communication and outreach for the Initiative, is a priority that most of the Initiatives need to address.

Table 1: Summary analysis of main responses received to the 2013 questionnaire

<i>letters of support</i>	<i>regular meetings of governance body</i>	<i>own identity, logo</i>	<i>functioning website, regularly updated</i>	<i>additional funding (excl. host& Ramsar)</i>	<i>own bank account & accounting procedures</i>	<i>hosting agreement</i>
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centres for:

East Africa	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Western Hemisphere	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Central & Western Asia	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no
East Asia	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no

networks for:

West African coast	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Niger river basin	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
High Andean	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
La Plata river basin	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Caribbean	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
American mangroves	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
EA-Austral Flyway	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mediterranean	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Carpathian	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
Nordic-Baltic	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Black Sea coast	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no

12. The analysis of the questionnaire also shows that a number of Initiatives, including some that have been established for many years (and are no longer eligible for Ramsar core budget funding) are still too dependent on single (host) country funds, and have not yet spread their funding sources sufficiently among all participating countries. Doing so rapidly will be essential to assure their future.
13. A substantial number of the Initiatives have not yet established their own accounting procedure, independent from the host organization (including a specific bank account), but are operating entirely through a host organization. This need not create significant difficulties or obstacles, where administrative procedures are sufficiently clarified, and where the managing staff on both sides (i.e., the Initiative and the host institution) remain supportive and in place. However, experience shows that the absence of their own accounting and finance procedures is hindering the independent and smooth operation of a number of Initiatives, depending heavily on Secretariat support. The Initiatives concerned need to improve this situation rapidly.

14. In view of the long-term survival of the Regional Initiatives, most of them are to be encouraged to develop and establish hosting agreements with those countries or institutions most likely to be able to provide an institutional framework and back-up.

Action requested 2: The Standing Committee is invited to endorse the above-listed 15 Regional Initiatives as fully meeting the 2009-2012 Operational Guidelines and operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during 2013.

Action requested 3: Once it has adopted the revised Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 (cf. above), the Committee is invited to take note of the summary analysis of the priority issues addressed in paragraphs 7-14 above, and to request the Initiatives concerned to report on the solutions of these points in their annual report to be submitted in time for the 47th meeting of Standing Committee in early 2014. Standing Committee is invited to make its endorsement of the Regional Initiatives, as fully meeting the 2013-2015 Operational Guidelines and operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention during the period 2013-2015, conditional on their satisfactory reporting on the above points in time for SC47.

Allocation of Ramsar core budget funds to Regional Initiatives for activities in 2013

15. The Parties at COP11 agreed through Resolution XI.5 (para. 12) “to earmark financial support to Regional Initiatives in the Convention core budget for their activities during the period 2013-2015, provided that they are determined by the Standing Committee to fully meet the Operational Guidelines”.
16. COP11 decided “that the levels of financial support to individual Regional Initiatives for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015 through that budget line will be determined by the Standing Committee during its annual meetings, based upon updated financial and work plans to be submitted in the required format not later than two months prior to its annual meetings, and with the benefit of the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance” (Resolution XI.5, paragraph 13).
17. COP11 also specified rules regarding eligibility for Ramsar core budget financial support: notably that this support “will, in principle, only be provided for a period corresponding to the interval between two meetings of COP” (paragraph 15), “that financial support for Ramsar Regional Centres that meet the Operational Guidelines can be obtained for a period of up to six years in total (paragraph 16), and “that Regional Initiative Networks that have already received financial support from the Convention’s core budget for one triennium may have a three-year phasing out period, giving them the opportunity to find complementary means of financing their activities, and that financial support from the Convention’s core budget will then cease” (paragraph 17).
18. The Regional Initiative for the Mediterranean (MedWet) has received funding support from the Ramsar budget during two consecutive periods 2003-2008 between COP8 and COP10. The regional centres for the Western Hemisphere (established in Panama city) and for Central and West Asia (established in Ramsar), as well as the networks for regional cooperation in the High Andean region and along the West African coast (WacoWet), have received Ramsar financial support for two consecutive periods 2006-2012 between

COP9 and COP11 (i.e., for six years). According to Resolution XI.5 (paragraphs 15-17), these five Initiatives are thus no longer eligible for Ramsar core budget funding support.

19. Another seven Regional Initiatives have received Ramsar core budget start-up funding for one period between COP10 and COP11 (2009-2012). The regional centre for East Africa (established in Kampala) has received Ramsar funding during four years (2009-2012). With this, it is only eligible for additional Ramsar funding support during two years within the period 2013-2015 (Resolution XI.5, paragraphs 15-16). The networks for the La Plata river and Niger river basins, for the Caribbean, American mangroves and reefs, Carpathian, and Black and Azov Sea coastal wetlands (BlackSeaWet) have also received Ramsar funding during the period 2009-2012 between COP10 and COP11. They are now considered to be at the beginning of a three-year phasing out period between COP11 and COP12 (Resolution XI.5, para. 17). All of them (except BlackSeaWet) are requesting financial support from the Ramsar core budget for their activities in 2013.
20. Table 2 provides an overview for all Ramsar Regional Initiatives, based on their annual reporting. It shows total Ramsar core budget funding received to the end of 2011, allocations made by Standing Committee in 2012, real expenditures by the Initiatives during 2012, Initiative moneys available for activities in 2013, planned expenditures for activities in 2013, and new funding requests from the Ramsar core budget 2013 for those activities. Allocations for 2012 shown in brackets have been contractually earmarked to specific Initiatives, but not yet disbursed at this stage. They will be disbursed shortly, according to the contractual engagements.
21. The total eligible requests for additional Ramsar funding in 2013 amount to 129,719 CHF, which is within the 2013 core budget allocated for Regional Initiatives . Based on the decision by the Standing Committee on how to allocate 2013 funds to them, the Secretariat will prepare individual contracts for the Initiatives concerned, following the procedure established earlier by Standing Committee.

<p>Action requested 4: Standing Committee is invited to allocate requested funds from the Ramsar core budget 2013 according to the proposal in the right-hand column of Table 2.</p>

Table 2

0.9 CHF/USD
1.2 CHF/EUR

	<i>total Ramsar funding in the past (up to and including 2011)</i>	<i>2012 allocation disbursed (not yet disbursed)</i>	<i>real expenditure in 2012</i>	<i>left-over available at the beginning of 2013</i>	<i>planned expenditure for 2013</i>	<i>additional request to Ramsar for activities in 2013</i>	<i>proposed allocation by Standing Committee for 2013</i>
<i>regional centres for:</i>	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF
East Africa (Kampala)	151,357	¹ (25,000)	35,500	15,000	177,500	35,000	35,000
Western Hemisphere (Panama)	207,286	¹ (16,000)	52,200	56,116	208,800	² not eligible	
Central and West Asia (Ramsar)	285,000	<i>nil</i>	332,573	18,000	729,000	² not eligible	
East Asia (Changwon)	<i>nil</i>	<i>nil</i>	376,200	<i>nil</i>	346,500	<i>nil</i>	
<i>regional networks for:</i>							
West African coast	157,700	¹ (10,000)	10,157	5,000	58,500	² not eligible	
Niger river basin	20,000	¹ (10,000)	10,095	?	35,500	30,000	30,000
High Andean	133,000	10,000	29,297	<i>nil</i>	44,000	² not eligible	
La Plata river basin	20,000	14,000	15,260	7,978	31,700	16,700	16,700
Caribbean	28,800	¹ (15,000)	7,000	42,362	140,000	15,000	15,000
American mangroves and reefs	82,000	¹ (20,000)	12,000	45,757	191,000	20,000	20,000
East Asian-Australasian Flyway	<i>nil</i>	<i>nil</i>	445,590	253,170	591,660	<i>nil</i>	
Mediterranean	310,930	<i>nil</i>	185,748	<i>nil</i>	132,000	² not eligible	
Carpathian	104,000	16,560	74,758	22,501	118,080	13,019	13,019
Nordic-Baltic	<i>nil</i>	<i>nil</i>	21,600	?	11,760	<i>nil</i>	
Black and Azov Sea coast	83,080	¹ (3,179)	6,889	45,149	20,000	<i>nil</i>	
Totals	1,868,867	139,739	1,614,867	511,026	2,836,000	129,719	129,719

¹ contractual allocations for 2012 still to be disbursed in early 2013² according to the provisions of paragraphs 15-17 of Resolution XI.5

Annex 1

Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands

Note: For the ease of comparison with the text of the Guidelines 2009-2012, **new** and **revised text** is shown in **bold** below. Once the final wording for the 2013-2015 Guidelines will have been adopted, this boldening will be removed.

The aim of Regional Initiatives

1. Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern.
2. Geographical regions to be covered by specific Initiatives are defined according to the wetland-related needs of the relevant actors in the region. In practical terms, a Regional Initiative may correspond to one of the six regional groups established by the Convention through Resolution VII.1 (**slightly revised through Resolution XI.19**), but it may also be more restricted in geographical focus or span several regional groups defined in Resolution **XI.19**, if the Contracting Parties concerned consider that to be more appropriate.
3. Because Regional Initiatives are intended to provide lasting, structural and operational support to facilitating and improving the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in a defined geographical region, it is important to make sure that there is support from all participating Contracting Parties or a significant number of Contracting Parties in the region concerned. **Such support needs to be confirmed through a formal letter by the national Ramsar authorities, ideally renewed for each period between two Ramsar COPs.** Sufficient **national support by the countries concerned** is essential to setting up a minimal operational structure for effective work in the region.
4. Regional Initiatives that are fully consistent with the aims listed above are different from regional projects. Regional projects are joint activities or programmes proposed by several Contracting Parties for a given geographical region, focusing on specific aspects, often limited in time. Regional projects can be the operational means for delivering specific aspects of Regional Initiatives, but should not be confused with the latter.

Coordination between Regional Initiatives and the Secretariat

5. The development of effective coordination between Regional Initiatives, acting regionally, and the Ramsar Secretariat, acting globally and being responsible to the Standing Committee and the COP, is essential.
6. The Ramsar Secretariat has no capacity to develop, coordinate or run Regional Initiatives ; but it will endeavour to the best of its ability to assist them, including through mobilization of additional resources.

7. The role of the Secretariat is to maintain regular links with the Regional Initiatives, to advise them, **and notably** to make sure that global Ramsar guidelines are applied throughout the different regions, and that their strategic and operational targets are fully aligned with the Convention's Strategic Plan.
8. The Secretariat must receive regular reports from the Regional Initiatives to be able to report to Standing Committee and the COP on their progress as required.
9. **Regional Initiatives need to raise the visibility of the Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives, but they do not act as regional offices of the Convention Secretariat.**
10. **They need to describe themselves as an operational means to provide support for the implementation of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention, and to present themselves with their own identity, in order to avoid any confusion between the roles of Regional Initiatives, the Ramsar Administrative Authorities at national level, and the Ramsar Secretariat at international level. Practical means to this end are the adoption of a specific logo, to be used in combination with the Ramsar logo, and the establishment and regular updating of a specific website.**
11. The complementary roles of the coordinating mechanisms of Regional Initiatives and of the Ramsar Secretariat, **including their respective responsibilities, may be defined in written arrangements**, if agreed by all participating Contracting Parties.
12. The establishment of Regional Initiatives is a process over time. In order to fulfill their aims, Regional Initiatives depend on the services provided by professional staff who can assure a minimal coordination between the Contracting Parties and other members participating in the Initiative. Contracting Parties or other members participating in a Regional Initiative need to provide such services, as the Ramsar Secretariat is unable to so do.
13. The Regional Initiatives should aim to develop the capacity to take on the additional role of coordinating and supervising regional projects that are developed under the framework of such Regional Initiatives . Projects and programmes to support the Initiative through actions with a geographically or thematically more restricted focus, often limited in time, are likely to develop increasingly over time. They should be supervised by the coordinating bodies or mechanisms of Regional Initiatives .
14. Professional staff involved in Regional Initiatives who supervise regional projects add substantial implementation capacity for the Convention in the region.

Governance of Initiatives

15. Regional Initiatives need to become firmly established in their geographical region. They must establish their own governance and advisory mechanisms, involving all relevant Contracting Parties and other appropriate stakeholders, in order to provide guidance and insight.
16. In order to establish a professional coordination body or mechanism, the support of a host country or a host intergovernmental organization is essential. When established, the

coordination body needs to be able to operate independently and be responsible through its work and reporting to all members that constitute a Regional Initiative (Contracting Parties and other members), not only to the host country.

17. Elaborating equitable and transparent **governance and coordination** structures is essential. **These structures** need to be laid down in **a set of operational procedures, based on written**, commonly agreed terms of reference, rules of procedure, or operational guidance.
18. **Regional Initiatives shall inform the Convention Secretariat of the establishment of their governance body and submit a list of its composition. Terms of reference, rules of procedure, or other written regulations for the governance and coordination of the Initiative shall be shared with the Secretariat, as well as the minutes and decisions taken by all meetings of the governance body.**
19. The Conference of the Parties and the Standing Committee shall receive, through the Secretariat, reports on the activities of Regional Initiatives and shall oversee their general policies relating to the implementation of the Convention.

Substantive elements of Initiatives

20. Regional Initiatives should be based on a bottom-up approach. As a matter of priority, the involvement of all Contracting Parties of the specific region covered by the Initiative should be sought from the start.
21. Each Initiative should entail the participation, from the start, not only of the Administrative Authorities responsible for the application of the Convention in the Contracting Parties involved, but also of all other relevant stakeholders with an interest in and directly or indirectly responsible for wetland issues, including the ministries responsible for the environment and water issues, intergovernmental bodies, Ramsar International Organization Partners (IOPs), other NGOs, academia, local communities, and economic actors.
22. A Regional Initiative should base its operation on the development of networks of collaboration established upon a clearly defined framework, thus creating an enabling environment for the involvement of all stakeholders at all levels.
23. At an early stage, a Regional Initiative should seek collaboration with other intergovernmental or international partners and Ramsar IOPs operating in its region, by establishing complementary and non-duplicative activities. **The establishment of such collaborations should be reported to the Secretariat.**
24. The operation of a Regional Initiative should be focused upon making optimal use of the Ramsar tools (frameworks, guidelines, guidance, methodologies, etc.) published in the Ramsar Handbook and Technical Reports series, and it should be based upon strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions which should be recognized as partners in the Initiative. **The use of specific Ramsar guidance should be reported to the Secretariat.**

25. The strategic and operational targets of a Regional Initiative should be fully aligned with the Strategic Plan of the Convention by means of policy and site technical work and activities.
26. Regional Initiatives need to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives. Specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders should be included in their work plans. The outcomes of such activities should be communicated to the Secretariat for use by the Ramsar CEPA Oversight Panel.
27. **Regional Initiatives need to support and serve the further development of the work of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) through direct cooperation between STRP national focal points and STRP members and experts, and through synergies to be established at all possible levels of the activities undertaken by Regional Initiatives .**

Financial and other support

28. A Regional Initiative requires both political support from all participating Contracting Parties and financial support from **at least** one or more Contracting Parties and other relevant partners in the region. **Equitably spread financial support by all parties concerned is likely to provide a more stable financial base.**
29. Substantial support from a host country is especially important if a coordinating office is to be established. **This would need a hosting agreement to be signed, in order to provide sufficient independence of operation to the Regional Initiative in terms of staffing, accounting and fundraising.**
29. The launching of a Regional Initiative needs to rely upon secured funding for planned work, activities and projects.
30. Financial support for a Regional Initiative from the Convention's core budget, should the COP and Standing Committee so decide, **will only be provided as start-up funding, in principle only for a period corresponding to the interval between two meetings of the COP.** After that period, the Initiative should be self-sustaining, and the Ramsar core support for it will be allocated to other Initiatives instead. **Financial support to regional centres that meet the Operational Guidelines can be obtained for a period of up to six years in total.**
31. The Ramsar meeting of the COP allocates a specific amount of funding to the core budget line for Regional Initiatives for the time until the next meeting of the COP. Based on this global amount, the Standing Committee allocates specific funds to individual Initiatives on an annual basis. This annual allocation will be based on individual reports to be submitted in good time in a standard format to the Secretariat. These reports will provide information on the operational readiness and the urgency of Ramsar core funding needs by the Initiative during the coming year.
32. Regional Initiatives need to generate their own resources and become financially self-sufficient after an initial start-up phase and in the long term. When deciding financial support from the Convention's core budget, geographically equitable distribution will be

taken into account over the long term. This is not always possible during a single interval between two meetings of the COP, for which proposals must be weighed on their merits and readiness to operate.

Reporting and evaluation

33. Regional Initiatives that are recognized by the COP as operating within the framework of the Convention must submit progress reports to the Secretariat, according to a standard format, in time to allow adequate reporting to the next meeting of the COP.
34. Annual reports of progress and financial status are required from Regional Initiatives requesting funding from the Ramsar core budget. Such reports have to reach the Secretariat in time for the preparation of the annual meeting of Standing Committee.
35. Disbursement of Ramsar funds will be undertaken at six-monthly intervals, based on a short progress report of activities and financial status to be submitted by the beneficiaries to the Secretariat.
36. Periodic assessment and review processes for the Initiatives are needed and will be coordinated by the Ramsar Secretariat according to specific rules to be approved by the Standing Committee. These review procedures are meant to assure that the Regional Initiatives are operating within the framework of agreed work plans and following the approaches approved by the Ramsar Convention through COP decisions.