

Report of the Secretariat on the Ramsar Regional Initiatives

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the annual reports submitted by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) for 2022 in accordance with Resolution XIV.7 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*;
- ii. note the allocation of funds from the 2023 Ramsar core budget line D “Support to Regional Initiatives” proposed in document SC62 Doc.8.1, to provide start-up funding to a newly established Initiative for its activities in 2023, as follows:
 - CHF 30,000 to the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative;
- iii. consider the proposal for a new Ramsar Regional Initiative, the International Mangrove Centre (IMC), within the framework of the Convention in accordance with Resolution XIV.19; and
- iv. take note that a call for proposals for new RRIs has been made in accordance with Resolution XIV.7, with a deadline for responses of 30 September 2023; and that the Secretariat will report the result of the call to the Standing Committee at its 63rd meeting.

Background

1. At its 14th meeting (COP14, 2022), in paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.7 Part A on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives*, the Conference of the Contracting Parties recalled that RRIs “which include regional centres for training and capacity building and regional networks to facilitate cooperation, are intended as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the Convention in specific geographic regions, through voluntary international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern”.
2. Through Resolution XIV.7 Part B, COP14 endorsed the following 20 RRIs, as operating in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands until COP15:

Four Ramsar regional centres for training and capacity building:

- Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
- Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO)
- Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA)
- Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia (RRC-EA); and

Sixteen Ramsar networks for regional cooperation:

- Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin
- Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership
- Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia
- Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative
- Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet)
- Carpathian Wetland Ramsar Regional Initiative (CWI)
- Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (NorBalWet)
- Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet)
- The Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI)

Progress by the 20 Ramsar Regional Initiatives in 2022

3. Through the *Operation Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention* in the Annex of Resolution XIV.7, RRIs are requested to submit to the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, annual financial and progress reports regarding the implementation of their workplan, using the format in Annex 3 of the same Resolution. Contracting Parties also instruct the Secretariat in paragraph 14 of Resolution XIV.7 to “provide the COP and Standing Committee a summary of the information obtained from the annual reports to assist these bodies in their reviews of RRIs and decisions regarding funding”.
4. The coordinators of RRIs were requested to submit the report of progress of work in 2022 and planned work for 2023, including a financial overview, to the Secretariat by 20 January 2023. These reports are available here:
[https://www.ramsar.org/search?f\[\]=search_item_type%3Adocuments&f\[\]=bodies_and_events%3A2723&f\[\]=search_date%3A2023&sort_bef_combine=search_api_relevance_DESC](https://www.ramsar.org/search?f[]=search_item_type%3Adocuments&f[]=bodies_and_events%3A2723&f[]=search_date%3A2023&sort_bef_combine=search_api_relevance_DESC).
5. The Secretariat sent reminders to the RRI coordinators, requesting them to submit annual reports, and followed up bilaterally with each of them. Annual reports were received from 17 RRIs. The following RRIs did not submit annual reports within the required deadlines:
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet);
 - Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet).
6. Failure by RRIs to submit annual report has been increasing in recent years. Table 1 below indicates RRIs that have not submitted a report in one of the last five years.

Table 1: RRI that have not submitted a report, 2019-2023

RRI	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
WACoWet				X	X
SenegalWet				X	X
CREHO		X		X	
High Andean Wetlands			X	X	
BlackSeaWet					X

7. WACoWet and SenegalWet did not submit their annual report for 2021-2022, after they had received the first tranche of funding from the Convention allocated from the core budget in 2021 (SenegalWet) and African voluntary contribution fund in 2020 (WACoWet). For this reason, the Secretariat did not disburse the second and final instalments to these RRIs in 2022.
8. RRIs are encouraged to submit their annual reports in the next reporting cycle in line with subparagraph 12.e) of Resolution XIV.7.
9. The Secretariat reviewed the annual reports submitted by 17 RRIs and prepared a summary based on their ongoing activities. Annex 1 of the present document presents an overview of the reports submitted.
10. According to the reports, most RRIs play an important role in bringing the member Contracting Parties together to promote regional cooperation:
 - Most RRIs have held at least one coordination meeting during the year.
 - Most RRIs organized or supported CEPA activities in the region, including World Wetlands Day celebrations.
 - Few RRIs conducted regional policy studies or assessments on thematic areas, including climate change, invasive species, and Ramsar Site management.
 - Most RRIs have engaged in fundraising activities such as writing funding proposals or establishing sustainable financing platforms.
 - Two RRIs have been providing regular training courses for wetland managers in their region.
11. The total annual expenditure of RRIs in 2022 is estimated at CHF 2.7 million. This is a slight decrease from CHF 2.9 million in 2021.¹ Six RRIs have reported an annual expenditure of over 100,000 CHF, while five RRIs have reported an annual expenditure of less than 2,000 CHF (this does not include the three RRIs that have not submitted annual reports this year).
12. Commonly recognized challenges identified from the reports were limited financial resources, delay in implementing activities due to COVID-19 restrictions, and lack of coordination due to a rotating coordination scheme. In 2022, however, RRIs were beginning to hold more face-to-face meetings which led to a higher expenditure rate from 76% in 2021 to 79% in 2022.²
13. The Secretariat has been encouraging more dialogues among RRIs to promote learning from each other. As one of the first activities during COP14, the Secretary General met coordinators of RRIs. The Secretariat also organized a virtual annual planning meeting of RRIs on 24 January

¹ Based on annual actual expenditure reported by RRIs (for those reported in a currency other than CHF, the annual average exchange rate for 2022 was applied).

² Expenditure rate refers to annual income (including income carried over from previous years) in relation to actual expenditure.

2023. This was the first time that RRIs had the opportunity to share their annual plans with other RRIs and identify possible areas of cooperation.

14. Some RRIs have already taken steps toward regional cooperation. Europe is working toward the establishment of a coalition of European Ramsar Regional Initiatives. In Asia, RRIs are becoming members of other RRIs, while one RRI has provided financial support to another RRI.

Allocation of Convention core budget funds for activities of new RRIs in 2023

15. In paragraph 17 of Resolution XIV.7, the Conference of the Parties notes that “RRIs that have been endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention are eligible for start-up financial support from the core budget of the Convention” and recommends that “the start-up financial support is to be provided for up to six years, according to decisions on budgetary matters”. Through paragraph 18 of the same Resolution, Contracting Parties decided “that the levels of financial support from the Convention core budget to eligible RRIs will be determined annually by the Standing Committee”, based on the annual report submitted by the RRI to the Secretariat, and “informed by the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance to the Standing Committee”.
16. For 2022, there were no requests for core budget support, as all RRIs that were eligible to receive financial support had already received the allowable support from the core budget. Through Decision SC59/2022-09, the Standing Committee approved the proposal for a new RRI in the Southern African Development Community Region, and the Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI) was endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention and was further endorsed during COP14 through Resolution XIV.7 Part B.
17. Through the annual report, SARRI has requested 30,000 CHF from the Convention core budget to support its activities in 2023.

Proposals for new RRIs

18. Through paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.19 on *Proposal to establish an International Mangrove Centre (a Ramsar Regional Initiative)*, Contracting Parties welcomed the proposal by the People’s Republic of China and interested Contracting Parties to establish an RRI (the “International Mangrove Centre”) and invited submission of the proposed RRI to the 62nd Meeting of the Standing Committee (SC62) for consideration.
19. The Secretariat received on 30 April 2023 from China a proposal, in line with Annex 2 of Resolution XIV.7, on the establishment of the International Mangrove Center (IMC) as a Ramsar Regional Initiative. The proposal was evaluated by the Secretariat using the criteria in Resolution XIV.7 and the *Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives*.
20. The Secretariat received an updated proposal on 18 August 2023 from China requesting a re-evaluation of the proposal. The updated proposal can be found at this link: <https://www.ramsar.org/document/ramsar-regional-initiative-proposal-form-international-mangrove-centre-final-version>. The updated proposal was re-evaluated using the same criteria.
21. The evaluation result is that the IMC meets the requirements outlined in the *Operational Guidelines*. The Secretariat has received ten letters of support from Contracting Parties at the time of finalization of this revised document (30 August 2023). The proposal for the RRI indicates that more such letters of support will be received before the start of SC62.

22. The Secretariat requests that the Standing Committee at its 62nd meeting consider the International Mangrove Centre for endorsement as operating within the framework of the Convention.
23. Paragraph 27 of Resolution XIV.7 instructs the Secretariat to open calls for proposals for new RRIs, to be endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties or intersessionally by the Standing Committee. The Secretariat sent Parties a diplomatic note (Note 2023/3) on 3 April 2023 inviting the submission of proposals by 30 September 2023 for new RRIs to be formally recognized during the period of the 2023-2025 triennium. The Secretariat plans to report on the result of the call for proposals to the Standing Committee at SC63.
24. In connection with the call for proposals for new RRIs, the Secretariat has begun working with the International Organization Partners, to identify opportunities for promoting the establishment of RRIs in parts of the world where there are currently no RRIs and where there is currently limited wetland management capacity, as requested by paragraph 9 of Resolution XIV.7.

Annex 1
Summary of the annual reports of RRIs for 2022-2023

Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) and year of establishment	Principles from Resolution XIII.9					Planned budget for 2022 (CHF unless stated)	Expenditure in 2022 (CHF unless stated)	Financial resources	Key activities	Challenges
	No. of countries supporting the RRI	TORs (incl. ROPs)	Structure and governance	Status/role of the Convention Secretariat	Financial management					
Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), 2009	5	Yes	Governing Council is the policy-making body. The RAMCEA Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day activities and reports to the Governing Council.	Observer	Responsibility of RAMCEA Secretariat. The Collaborative Management Board reviews annual reports and approves the budget and financial regulations. The Secretariat executes the budget.	120,000	39,473	Government of Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAMCEA Governing Council held - Supported COP14 participation, including organizing side event / exhibition - Globwetland Africa toolbox training for 3 countries (Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania) - CEPA material publication 	Administrative and resource mobilization challenges
Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research in the Western Hemisphere (CREHO), 1999	30	Yes	Governance Body is the Board of Directors (responsible for all financial, administrative and operational decisions).	Permanent. Member of the Board of Directors	Responsibility of the Board to approve budget and oversee financial management.	260,698	139,457	Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CSF), Empresa Education First (EFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of project “Guaranteeing the Water Security in Santa Maria River Mountain Forests and Wetlands” - Implementation of project “Governance and Green Infrastructure to Mitigate Impact in Parita Bay, Panama” - CEPA programme for students 	Resource mobilization and financial stability

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	No. of countries supporting the RRI	TORs (incl. ROPs)	Structure and governance	Status/role of the Convention Secretariat	Financial management					
Ramsar Regional Center in Central and West Asia (RRC-CWA), 2002	18 (15 Contracting Parties and 3 Non-CPs)	Yes	Administrative bodies are the Collaborative Management Board (CMB) and the RRC-CWA Secretariat. The CMB provides strategic guidance, approves programmes/activities, approves budget and financial regulation, and HR issues.	Collaborative Management Board Member	Collaborative Management Board reviews annual reports and approves the budget and financial regulations.	368,550	33,670	Department of Environment (I.R. Iran), National Environment Fund	- 11 capacity-building workshops - 1 study tour for Qatari experts - Support to 20 provinces in I.R. Iran to celebrate WWD	Legal status of Center, challenge in receiving international funds
Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia (RRC-EA), 2009	18	Yes	The Steering Committee provides guidance in the development of policies and programmes. The Executive Director leads the day-to-day operations.	Steering Committee member	Reported to Steering Committee.	1,251,744	784,380	Ministry of Environment (Republic of Korea), Suncheon City, Amore-Pacific	- Training of Wetland Managers (regional, sub-regional, national), development of Eco-DRR guidance - Organization of WLI-Asia Conference - RRC-EA Wetland Fund - WWD activities in the Republic of Korea - CEPA activities (website, web magazine, documentary production)	No mention

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Ramsar Regional Initiative for West African Coastal Zone Wetlands (WACoWet), 2009	13	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the WACoWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Procedure Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Niger River Basin (NigerWet), 2006	9	Yes (draft)	The Supervisory Council is in charge of the overall supervision of the policies of the NigerWet Secretariat, and it monitors and reviews implementation of strategies, annual plan, risk management, and financial situation / management.	Observer	Financial & Accounting Manual (2013) captures the procedures of planning and budget, accounting policy, financial reports, accounting registers / documents.	None	None	None	N/A	N/A

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Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of High Andean Wetlands (HAW), 2005	8	Yes	The Coordination Committee (National Focal Points of member countries) has annual meetings to follow up the implementation of the strategy and its action plan.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of the Coordination Committee).	None	None	Wetlands for the Future Fund	- Meeting of the Coordination Committee at COP14 - Presentation of the guide on good restoration practices	Rotation of coordination
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of the Plata River Basin, 2009	5	Yes	The Coordination Committee (member countries) as the governance body reviews progress annually.	Provides support to the Coordination Committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	None	None		- Meeting of the Coordination Committee at COP14	Recurring institutional changes

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Caribbean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (CariWet), 2009	14	Yes	The Regional Initiative Committee is coordinated by two member countries and includes all Contracting Party members of the Initiative, the Convention Secretariat, and the Caribbean sub-regional representatives at the Standing Committee (past, present, and future).	Regional Initiative Committee member providing support	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	No information	361,000	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany (IKI)	- Launch of the IKI project in the Dominican Republic - Workshop on Climate Change and Ecosystem Services in the Dominican Republic - Side event at COP14	Overcoming delays due to COVID19
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs, 2009	14	Yes	The coordination committee of the Initiative is led by two member countries and includes all Contracting Parties with Secretariat's support.	Provides support to the regional committee	Coordination Committee (previous Standing Committee allocations were administered by the Secretariat under decisions of Coordination Committee).	No information	48,769	Wetlands for the Future Fund, in-kind	- Meetings of the Coordination Committee - Update of the regional projects - Implementation of the regional project on "Status of coastal blue carbon ecosystem and capacity-building of the countries that make up the RRI"	Communication among countries, Resource Mobilization, rotation of coordination

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East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, 2006	18	No (structural info. is on its website)	The EAAFP Management Committee provides general policy, operational and financial direction to the EAAFP Secretariat. A meeting of the Partnership is held annually to oversee the implementation of the Partnership.	Partner	The EAAFP Finance Sub-Committee provides advises the Secretariat and Partners on overall financial management. Reporting to the Meeting of Partners (MOP).	653,479 (USD)	231,977 (USD)	Incheon Metropolitan City government, EAAFP Partner voluntary contributions, fundraising, project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and develop Flyway Network Sites including small grant programmes and technical advice on local sites - CEPA activities including Youth Think Tank and multiple webinars - Research, monitoring, knowledge including waterbird survey - Capacity building for local rangers - Flyway-wide approaches including support for ADB Regional Flyway Initiative 	No mention

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Mediterranean Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiative (MedWet), 1991	27	Yes	The Initiative includes the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com); the MedWet Steering Group (MedWet/SG); the MedWet Scientific and Technical Network; the MedWet Secretariat. The MedWet/Com is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the initiatives, including approval of strategic documents, annual budget and audited financial reports.	Permanent observer of the MedWet/Steering Group	The MedWet Secretariat administrates the approved budgets and submits the annual financial report to the MedWet/SG and to the MedWet/Com for approval.	646,275 (EUR)	606,000 (EUR)	Partner countries of MedWet, MAVA Foundation, European Union, French Biodiversity Agency and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for drafting of Resolution XIV.17 - Launched the Coalition of European Ramsar Regional Initiatives - Growth and consolidation of the Mediterranean Ramsar Site Managers Network which went from 6 to 46 managers - Strong impact of the MedWet Academy including 2 technical workshops and 5 online training courses for a total of 360 direct beneficiaries - Great success of the coordination of the WWD in the Mediterranean with the direct involvement of 562 organizations which organized 1121 events and reached more than 85,000 people 	Increased coordination with other RRIs and international NGOs

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Carpathian Wetland Ramsar Regional Initiative (CWI), 2004	7	Yes	The implementation body of CWI is a Board, which is composed of the focal points of each member. The Board elects a chair to guide the proceedings and meet periodically.	Provide inputs to the Board	Provided by the Board and the coordinating institution of the host country.	49,558 (EUR)	20,161	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment - Czechia, Ministry of Environment - Slovakia Ministry of Agriculture - Hungary, Centre for Ecological Research, UNE SCC, Eurosite, Succow Stiftung - Germany, Wetlands Int'l, Convention funding carryover from previous years	- Continued activities from previous years - Enforced networking, cooperation with relevant regional networks, partners, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, voluntary contributions from some ministries of the Carpathian countries to the CWI budget - Project proposals consulted and submitted - Establishment of the European Coalition of Ramsar Regional Initiatives with support of CWI	Capacities of coordination of RRI, governance and legal entity of RRI, war in Ukraine
Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Ramsar Regional Initiatives (NorBalWet), 2005	10	Yes	The Coordination Group composed of the National Focal Points of each participating country is the decision-making body.	Permanent observer of the Coordination Group	Host Country provides administrative support.	1,190	1,181	Ministry of Environment (Finland)	- Discussions on revitalizing the RRI were initiated - Website maintained until 31 December 2022	Challenging to hold regular meetings

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Ramsar Regional Initiative on Black and Azov Seas Coastal Wetlands (BlackSeaWet), 2007	7	Yes	The implementing bodies are the Management Body and the National Working Groups. The responsibilities of the Management Body include taking strategic decisions and approving and monitoring annual work plans.	Member of Management Body	Provided by the Government of Ukraine (No detailed information)	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted
Ramsar Regional Initiative for the Senegal River Basin (SenegalWet), 2016	4	Yes (by-laws and internal regulations)	The governance bodies are: the Commission, the Governing Board, and the Secretariat of the Initiative. The Commission's responsibilities include making decision on directions of the Initiative, approving strategies, programme and work plan, and controlling financial resources.	No detailed information	Yes (by-laws and internal regulations).	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted	No 2022-23 report submitted

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Regional Initiative for the Amazon River Basin, 2016	7	Yes	The Initiative is coordinated by the Coordination Committee, of which the members are the National Focal Points.	The Convention Secretariat supports the governance body	Managed by the Convention Secretariat under decisions of the coordinator of the Initiative.	111,000	87,529	Convention's core budget (Balance carried over from previous year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of RRI countries at COP14 - Consultancy "Capacity building in wetland restoration, rehabilitation and monitoring strategies" - Translation of capacity-building consultancy products and 3 virtual training modules - Prioritization matrix exercise 	Delay/virtual meeting due to COVID19
Ramsar Regional Initiative for Central Asia (RRI-CA), 2016	5	No	The decision-making body is the Coordination Committee, which is composed of three key members and six alternatives members from member countries.	Observer	Technical Secretary of the RRI-CA (based at CAREC).	49,752	48,047	GIZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RRI-CA coordination meeting and inception workshop - Assessment of common problems in Ramsar Sites in Central Asia - Nomination of 4 sites in Uzbekistan for Ramsar Sites - Updating of RRI-CA websites 	Need for more face-to-face meetings

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Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI), 2016	5	Yes	The Steering Committee, which is composed of the Administrative Authorities of member countries, provides oversight of the Initiative's operation.	Observer	Managed by IUCN Asia Regional Office.	196,408	228,212	Korea Environmental Industry & Technology Institute, BMU-IKI, EAAFP, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of GCF concept note - Develop comprehensive management plans for two sites - Small grant workshop on EbA best practices - Training on landscape-scale assessments - IBRRI Wetlands Outlook publication and support for WWD, CEPA activities 	Travel restrictions in the Indo-Burma Region until July 2022
Southern African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI), 2022	10	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	None	None	N/A	N/A	N/A

Annex 2

Review of documentation submitted by the proposed new Ramsar Regional Initiative

A. The aim of Ramsar's Regional Initiatives

1. RRIs as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan and to raise the visibility of the Convention in the region.
 - **The International Mangrove Centre (IMC)** supports the implementation of Resolutions VII.9, XIV.6 and XIV.7 on international cooperation under the Convention, as well as Resolutions VIII.32, XIII.14 and XIV.19 on mangroves and coastal blue ecosystems in the pantropical region. It supports the implementation of the fourth Strategic Plan 2016-2024 in Resolutions XII.2, XIII.5 and XIV.4. The operation of IMC will contribute to providing advice on evidence-based conservation practice regarding blue coastal ecosystems for the fifth Strategic Plan.
2. How the RRI aligns its activities and operational targets with the objectives of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
 - The **strategic objective of IMC** is to promote international collaboration and joint actions on mangrove conservation, restoration and sustainable management under the framework of the Convention on Wetlands.
 - There are **4 specific targets** of IMC as shown below.
 - Promote knowledge sharing and joint research on mangroves conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use;
 - Enhance technology transfer and technical cooperation and training on mangrove conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use;
 - Develop education and public awareness mechanisms on mangroves and adjacent wetlands;
 - Build and/or enhance capacity for mangrove conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use.
 - IMC is aligned with targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024.
3. The geographical region and a list of the countries that will actively participate.
 - The proponents describe the geographical region of IMC as "regions that host mangroves, geographically mainly distributed in tropical but also in subtropical and temperate zones".
 - **Interested Ramsar contracting parties, and non-parties with significant mangroves are eligible to joined the initiative voluntarily.** National Letters of Support or a Joint Statement before SC62 will confirm the list of eligible founder members.
4. List of Ramsar Administrative Authorities and all other participating stakeholders, such as Ministries other than those responsible for the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands, intergovernmental bodies, Convention on Wetlands International Organization Partners (IOPs), local communities, NGOs, economic actors, etc. that the RRIs will be engaging.

- **IMC** proposes to work with Governments of the member Contracting Parties (CPs), represented by:
 - the Administrative Authorities of the Convention including the three sponsoring CPs: China, Cambodia, Madagascar;
 - other Contracting Parties which have expressed their support by submitting to the Secretariat a National Letter of Support before SC62;
 - intergovernmental bodies: UNEP, UNEP WCMC, UNESCO, FAO;
 - other RRI: RAMCEA, RRC-EA, WACoWet, RRI for the Conservation and Wise Use of Mangroves and Coral Reefs, CariWet, and EAAFP;
 - IOPs: IUCN, WWF, Wetland International, WWT, Birdlife International, and IWMI;
 - NGOs: Conservation International, Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF), The Nature Conservancy;
 - academic organizations: Beijing Forestry University and Xiamen University; and
 - private sector stakeholder: PingAn.

B. Coordination Mechanisms

5. RRI's plan to assure coordination between the Parties and other members of the RRI. Coordinating functions assigned to Parties or participating institutions on a rotating basis, and modalities to be reflected in a regional agreement.
 - IMC will have a Secretariat, hosted jointly by the National Forest and Grassland Administration of China (NFGA) and the Shenzhen Municipal Government.
 - The IMC Secretariat will be managed by a Director General, who is appointed for a 3 year term of office through a vacancy announcement, with a selection procedure duly approved by the Council. The first Director General will be appointed by the Host Country.
 - The Core personnel of the IMC Secretariat will consist of: one Director-General (DG), one deputy DG for programme and external relations, one deputy DG for administrative matters and finance, who will be appointed representative of the host country, and officers in administration, finance, science, communication, training and project management.
 - The Secretariat will be overseen by the IMC Conference of Members and intersessionally by the Council (see the TORs for the role of the IMC Conference of Members and Council and the Management Board).

6. RRI's plans to develop an own identity, a specific logo (to be used in combination with the Ramsar logo) to avoid any confusion between its role and those of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities and the Secretariat and to establish and regularly update a website for the RRI.
 - **IMC** has an independent staff recruitment process, finance management and workplan; a third-party auditor; and legal status as an independent international organization registered in China, with its own logo and website.

7. RRI's plans to coordinate regional projects or programmes which are ongoing or developed under the Initiative, and note if professional staff will be involved in their implementation or supervision.
 - **Initial projects concept:**
 - a) One year joint research by member parties and multiple stakeholders on 1) global need and priorities in international cooperation on mangrove conservation and restoration; 2) trends and gaps in global mangrove and blue carbon ecosystem conservation and restoration; 3) innovations and best practices in mangrove

conservation, restoration and wise use. The result will be shared with STRP for technical input.

- b) Annual workshop on mangrove conservation, restoration and international cooperation, with 100-200 participants. The first one is to be held in May 2023.
- c) Annual training seminar for capacity building on mangrove conservation, restoration, sustainable management and wise use. The first one is to be organized in October 2023. Four seminars will be held annually from 2024.

- **Projects under development:**

- a) Priority pilot projects on mangrove restoration;
- b) Joint research projects on blue carbon accounting methodology and pilot sites on carbon trading for eco-compensation to mangrove conservation;
- c) Mangrove Ramsar Site Networking Programme;
- d) Pilot projects and guidance development on invasive alien species control;
- e) Joint Report on Status of Blue Carbon Coastal Ecosystems with various partners;
- f) Joint Capacity Building activities with other initiatives, such as Ramsar Mangrove and Coral Regional Initiative Countries for Management.

C. Governance

8. RRI's plan to establish in the region existing or planned mechanisms to provide governance, coordination and advice (committees, boards, etc.), and how all relevant Contracting Parties and other stakeholders will be able to provide guidance and insight.

- The governance structure is composed of 5 bodies.
 1. Conference of Members, primary decision making body, meeting every three years. ;
 2. Council, providing governance intersessionally;
 3. Scientific and Technical Committee, advisory body;
 4. Resource Mobilizing Committee, fund raising and resource mobilizing body;
 5. The Secretariat, coordination body.
- The composition of the bodies is as follows:
 1. Conference of Members: All members and observers.
 2. Council
 - a. six (6) elected country member representatives (excluding the host country), who shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms. Based on regions of the Convention on Wetlands, three (3) regions in IMC are defined as Africa and Europe, America (including Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America), Asia and Oceania. Each region shall elect two members (chair rotated among the regions);
 - b. a permanent vice chair, representing the host country of the IMC;
 - c. an elected representative from relevant UN agencies, as observer;
 - d. an elected representative from relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), as observer;
 - e. an elected representative from the Convention on Wetlands international organization partners (IOPs), as observer;
 - f. *Ex officio*, the Director General of IMC Secretariat and the Chairs of the Scientific and Technical, CEPA, and Resource Mobilizing Subgroups

3. Scientific and Technical Subgroup (STG)
 - a. three regional representatives;
 - b. three scientific experts; and
 - c. three technical experts, recommended by members and selected by the **Council**
4. Resource Mobilizing Subgroup (RMG)
 - a. a representative from Shenzhen Municipal Government (chair),
 - b. deputy DG for finance of the IMC Secretariat,
 - c. a representative from the International Mangrove Future Fund (IMFF),
 - d. a representative from the Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF); and
 - e. other interested donors, including private sector, members and observers.
5. Secretariat: described in section 5

The working language of the Conference of Members will be English. An Establishment Agreement will be formulated based on the Terms of Reference by the Conference of Members, at its first meeting.

9. RRIs have or plan to have terms of reference, rules of procedure, structure, and membership, and/or other written regulations which the Initiative has established or is planning.
 - A draft TOR has been developed with consultation with interested Parties (Attachment 1).

D. Substantive Elements

10. RRI's approach to create an enabling environment in the region, provide a framework for the development of collaborative networks, and seek collaboration with other intergovernmental or regional and international agencies, local NGOs, and partners, including Ramsar IOPs operating in the region.
 - **IMC** will engage Parties and stakeholders through participating governance and effective coordination. Objectives and activities of the Initiative will be designed with shared interests under the framework of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan. Annual work meetings of governance bodies, international workshops and training seminars will provide stable networks for members and stakeholders.
11. RRI's plan to make optimal use of the Ramsar tools and to consider strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions to become partners in the Initiative.
 - **IMC** will develop its Strategic Plan and Work Plan combining Resolutions and the Strategic Plan of the Convention with other global agendas in biodiversity, climate, land and sustainable development. Handbooks, Technical Reports and Briefing Notes of the STRP will be the guidance for knowledge sharing, technical exchange, joint research and training activities. Also, there will be feedback and inputs to the tools based on practice and improvement.
12. RRI's plans to raise the visibility of the Convention and awareness of Convention objectives, with specific activities to increase the visibility of the Convention and the general understanding of its objectives.

- **IMC** will increase the visibility of mangrove and adjacent wetland ecosystems through development of an education system and international network. Activities for mangrove conservation and restoration will promote cooperation among Parties and non-Party countries, as well as intergovernmental organizations and MEAs.

E. Financial and Other Support

13. RRI's plan on expenditure and financial requirements for the period 2022-2024 and financial support providers. Including amounts that have been firmly pledged and the needs not yet covered. Also, describe planned expenditures and the sources and payments of secured income for the year 2022.
 - Total planned expenditure will be 3 million CHF for the period 2023-2025 (1.5 million CHF for the Secretariat operation will be funded by the Shenzhen Municipal Government, 1.5 million CHF for activities will be funded by the International Mangrove Foundation of China).
 - 1.5 million CHF is expected to be used for the operation of the Secretariat and another 1.5 million CHF is to be used for annual work meeting, annual international workshop, and 2-4 training seminars per year.
 - Paragraphs 31 and 32 of the TOR describe the International Mangrove Futures Fund, established exclusively for mobilizing resources in support of IMC pilot projects in mangrove conservation and restoration, managed by an independent committee comprised of major donors. The contribution from IMFF to IMC is yet to be determined.
14. Requesting for start-up funding from the core funding. If yes, a plan on how the Initiative will generate its resources and become financially self-sufficient after the start-up phase and in the long term.
 - No core budget from the Convention is requested for the Initiative. There is a request for Secretariat staff support in coordination with the IMC Secretariat. Travels from the Convention Secretariat to IMC will be provided through the budget of IMC.
15. Plan on how the RRI will implement financial management to ensure transparency and accountability.
 - The budget, income and expenditure are approved by the Conference of Members and Council through its meetings. There will be a third party auditor of the finance of the IMC Secretariat and it will be open to the public and the Convention Secretariat through the annual report.
16. Bodies that have expressed political support in addition to those which have submitted a National Letter of Support.
 - Not available.
17. List of the letters of support (Form B submission) by national Ramsar Administrative Authorities and other partners.
 - Burkina Faso;

- Cambodia;
- China;
- Comoros;
- Gabon;
- Liberia;
- Madagascar;
- Mozambique;
- Nicaragua; and
- Sierra Leone.

Attachment 1: Draft terms of reference of the International Mangrove Centre (IMC)

I. Vision

1. A world in which Mangroves are conserved, restored, and wisely and sustainably used.

II. Mission

2. To establish an open, inclusive, co-built, and mutually beneficial international cooperation mechanism for mangrove and other adjacent coastal blue carbon ecosystems, thereby to promote international cooperation and joint action for mangrove conservation, restoration, and wise and sustainable use; strengthen the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands; the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); global climate goals under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement; and support relevant activities for achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM GBF) and the UN 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda, with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Under the framework of the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands, these Terms of Reference, made public and shared with the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, set out the initiative and functions of the International Mangrove Center (hereafter referred to as the IMC).
4. IMC is an ecosystem-based Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI) intended to:
 - provide technologies and actions for international cooperation and support for an effective implementation of the Convention on Wetlands, its Strategic Plan and Resolutions for contracting parties hosting mangroves;
 - improve the visibility of the Convention on Wetlands and its work on mangrove wetland-related issues through voluntary international cooperation; and
 - support ways and means of involving all mangrove related local, national, and regional stakeholders.
5. IMC is an independent and no-profit international organization. Based on mutual trust and respect, members conduct voluntary cooperation, and support relevant organizations involved in the conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use of mangroves, through close communication cooperation with other ongoing mangrove organizations and initiatives to ensure complementarity of efforts during the creation and future operation of the proposed RRIs.

III. Objectives

6. The IMC objectives are to:
 - a. Promote knowledge sharing and joint research on mangroves conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use;
 - b. Enhance technology transfer and technical cooperation and training on mangrove conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use;
 - c. Develop education and public awareness mechanisms on mangroves and adjacent wetlands;
 - d. Build and/or enhance capacity for mangrove conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use.

IV. Members and observers

7. Members

The IMC membership is open to all Contracting Parties of Convention on Wetlands and non-parties hosting mangroves.

Members shall: i) support and facilitate the mission, objectives, activities and governance of IMC; ii) provide to IMC, upon request, available information regarding their activities in support of IMC's objectives; iii) participate actively in the activities foreseen in the IMC's adopted annual work plan; iv) contribute actively to IMC's strategy developing, resource mobilization, and other activities of the Center.

Each member shall appoint a competent agency or authority as focal point for IMC.

8. Observers

Intergovernmental/international organizations, other Ramsar Regional Initiatives, non-government organizations, universities and research institutions, the private sector, and indigenous peoples and local communities, which have significant influence on or active involvement in conservation, restoration and wise and sustainable use of mangroves and adjacent coastal wetlands, may apply to be observers.

Observers may contribute to IMC through consultation, resource mobilization, participation in the relevant activities.

9. Member and Observer Admission

Co-sponsors of Resolution XIV.19 of the Convention on Wetlands, Contracting Parties that send the Ramsar Secretariat a National Letter of Support to the IMC RRI, Countries that join the Statement by the "Group of Friends of the International Mangrove Center" are eligible to be founding members of IMC.

IMC invites the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, other Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention on Wetlands, the Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF), and other education and research institutes, NGOs and donor organizations to apply as observers.

New applicants shall submit applications to the Secretariat of IMC. The Secretariat shall notify members of the application within one (1) month. New members of the IMC shall be admitted through a "silent assent" procedure without objection from any member within one (1) month.

10. Withdrawal

Any Member or Observer of this initiative may withdraw by submitting written notice to the other Members and Observers through the IMC Secretariat. Withdrawal will be enacted three months after the notice.

V. Governance

11. The IMC governance consists of five linked bodies:
 - a. **Conference of Members** - the primary decision-making body, meeting every triennium, with participation from all members ;
 - b. **Council**, providing intersessional advice and decisions;
 - c. Scientific and Technical Subgroup, advisory body to Council;
 - d. Resource Mobilizing Subgroup, fund raising body for IMC, reporting to Council; and
 - e. A Secretariat, coordination body.

VI. The Conference of Members

12. The **Conference of Members** is the primary governing and decision-making body for the IMC under the mandates and relevant Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Wetlands. The Conference meets every 3 years to develop strategy, guide and monitor the IMC's work programme and its resources. The Chair of the **Conference of Members** is also the Chair of **Council**.
13. **Observers** may participate in the **Conference of Members**.
14. The responsibilities of the **Conference of Members** in overseeing the IMC are to:
 - a. review and adopt the IMC strategic documents developed and submitted by **Council**;
 - b. consider work reports and recommendations from **Council** and the Secretariat;
 - c. select members of **Council**, select and appoint the Chair of **Conference of Members** and **Council**;
 - d. approve IMC budget framework and review IMC finance mechanisms and reports;
 - e. amend, if and as necessary, the Establishment Agreement of IMC.
15. Participants in the **Conference of Members** will make every effort to reach agreement on all matters by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, the report shall reflect the various views of all representatives in the **Conference of Members**. Notwithstanding the foregoing, adoption of the Terms of References the Rules of Procedure, and/or the Establishment Agreements and its amendments, and the budget from time to time adopted, shall require a two-third majority of Members present and voting. Each member has one vote.

VII. The Council

16. **Council** is the authorized governing and decision making body that operates intersessionally servicing the **Conference of Members**.
17. **Council** is composed of:
 - a. six (6) elected country member representatives (excluding the host country), who shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms. Based on regions of the Convention on Wetlands, three (3) regions in IMC are defined as Africa and Europe, America (including Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America), Asia and Oceania. Each region shall elect two members;
 - b. a permanent vice chair, representing the host country of the IMC;
 - c. an elected representative from relevant UN agencies, as observer;
 - d. an elected representative from relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), as observer;
 - e. an elected representative from the Convention on Wetlands international organization

- partners (IOPs), as observer;
 - f. *Ex officio*, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, as observer;
 - g. *Ex officio*, the Director General of IMC Secretariat and the Chairs of the Scientific and Technical, CEPA, and Resource Mobilizing Subgroups.
18. The Chair of **Council** shall rotate among the regions.
 19. **Council** meets on an annual basis. Interim meetings and video conferences may be convened as requested.
 20. The responsibilities of **Council** are to:
 - a. make operational decisions between **Conference of Members** based on the Strategy and Decisions adopted by the **Conference of Members**;
 - b. supervise and guide the preparation of meetings of IMC, including the **Conference of Members**, meetings of the **Council** and other bodies
 - c. develop and submit the Strategic Plan for the consideration of **Conference of Members**, with assistance of the IMC Secretariat;
 - d. approve and monitor the implementation of the annual work plan, report, and provisional budget, prepared by the Secretariat;
 - e. setup and provide guidance to the IMC specific subgroups, approve co-funded activities by members, the International Mangrove Future Fund (IMFF, see paragraph 31), and other donors in support of the work of IMC and its activities;
 - f. select and appoint a Director General, evaluate his/her performance on an annual basis for renewal or replacement of the Director General,
 - g. approve the Secretariat staff recruitment procedure; and
 - h. carry out other assignments given by the **Conference of Members**.
 21. The **Council** makes decisions through consensus.

VIII. The Secretariat

22. IMC's day-to-day work will be taken care of by the IMC Secretariat, which carries out the routine operational management and the administrative functions.
23. The IMC Secretariat operates under the authority and supervision of the **Conference of Members** and, as appropriate, the **Council**.
24. The IMC Secretariat is hosted in Shenzhen, China. It is managed by the Director General, who is appointed for a 3-year term of office through a vacancy announcement, with a selection procedure duly approved by the **Council**. The first Director General will be appointed from the Host Country. At the end of the assignment, the Director General's terms of office can be renewed if a positive evaluation is undertaken and approved by the **Council**, but the Director General shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms.
25. Core personnel of the IMC Secretariat consists of: i) one (1) Director General (DG), ii) one (1) deputy DG for programme and external relations, iii) one (1) deputy DG for administrative matters and finance, who shall be appointed representatives from the host country, and iv) the personnel also include officers in Administration, Finance, Science, Communication, Training, and Project Management. Other Secretariat staff may be recruited according to the needs of the work plan and availability of resources. Personnel management and payment will follow the IMC Human Resource regulations approved by the **Council**.

26. Under the leadership of the Director General, the responsibilities of the IMC Secretariat are to:
 - a. facilitate and promote collaboration among IMC members;
 - b. coordinate with the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands;
 - c. assist the Council to develop strategic plans for consideration by the **Conference of Members**;
 - d. coordinate and implement the strategic plans adopted by the **Conference of Members**;
 - e. prepare annual work plans and budgets, based on the decision made by the **Conference of Members**, and approved by **Council**;
 - f. implement those work plans approved by the **Council**, and conduct operational work and activities;
 - g. act as the secretariat for the **Conference of Members** and **Council**, prepare meetings of IMC, including the **Conference of Members**, meetings of the **Council** and other bodies;
 - h. administer the budgets adopted by the **Conference of Members** and to prepare the annual financial reports to be submitted to **Council** and to the **Conference of Members**;
 - i. report periodically to the **Council**, and the **Conference of Members**, the progress and outcomes of the IMC; and
 - j. represent the IMC in international fora.

IX. The IMC Scientific and Technical Subgroup (STG)

27. The **Scientific and Technical Subgroup**, is responsible for providing scientific and technological support to IMC. It is composed of three (3) regional representatives, three (3) scientific experts and three (3) technical experts, recommended by members and selected by the **Council**. The membership and Terms of Reference for the STG shall be developed under the guidance of **Council** and subject to the approval of the **Conference of Members**, at its first meeting.

X. The IMC Resource Mobilizing Subgroup (RMG)

28. The **Resource Mobilizing Subgroup** is responsible for developing the IMC financial mechanism, and mobilizing additional financial and other resources for the International Mangrove Futures Fund (IMFF, see paragraph 31), which supports IMC pilot projects in eligible countries. The Resource Mobilizing Subgroup is chaired by a representative from Shenzhen Municipal Government, and composed of the deputy DG for finance, a representative from the IMFF, a representative from the Mangrove Conservation Foundation (MCF) and other interested donors, including private sector, members and observers. The membership and Terms of Reference for the RMG shall be developed under the guidance of Council and subject to the approval of the Conference of Members, at its first meeting.

XI. Financing

29. The funding of IMC shall be derived from voluntary donations from the host country, other members, and other sources.
30. The **Conference of Members** shall adopt a baseline annual budget to cover the costs of the core staff and operations of the IMC Secretariat, including meetings and trainings. This baseline operation fund is covered by the host country.
31. A special fund, the International Mangrove Futures Fund (IMFF), shall be established exclusively for mobilizing resources in support of IMC pilot projects in mangrove conservation and

restoration. The IMFF shall be managed by an independent committee, composed of major donors.

32. The IMC Secretariat shall formulate regulations on additional financial support, mainly from IMFF (see paragraph 31), for the pilot projects in eligible countries. The Secretariat shall clarify application requirements, and evaluation and approval procedures based on strategic priorities and available resources. Members shall propose project applications to the Secretariat. The Secretariat shall evaluate the proposed projects and submits its findings to the **Council** for review and approval. The Secretariat, authorized by the **Council**, shall submit recommended projects to the IMFF and other relevant donors for consideration. The IMC Secretariat provides coordination to additional pilot projects granted by donors.

XII. Reporting

33. The IMC Secretariat shall report, with approval of **Council**, in a timely fashion annually through the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands to its Standing Committee on work progress, collaborations established, current financial status, including financial and work plans for the following year, and a summary of other funding sources, using the format adopted by the Convention on Wetlands Resolution XIV.7.

XIII. Use of the IMC name and logo

34. The name and logo of IMC are protected. They shall be used by any IMC members in conjunction and authorization with the Convention on Wetlands' logo for activities implemented within the framework of IMC.
35. Any other organization or individual wishing to use the logo must obtain approval from the IMC Secretariat.

XIV. Working languages

36. The working languages of the **Conference of Members** shall be English and Chinese. All documents shall be distributed in the two languages and simultaneous interpretation shall be provided at the face-to-face meetings of the **Conference of Members**. The costs of working languages shall be included in the budget of the face-to-face meetings of the **Conference of Members**. If resources are obtained, French and/or Spanish shall be used as the other working languages at the face-to-face **Conference of Members**. The host country of any **Conference of Members** held outside China may voluntarily arrange translation into its language.