

Agenda item 9

Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention

Action requested: The document provides a summary of proposed regional initiatives for the period 2009-2012 and requests a number of decisions to be taken by SC40. Notably, Standing Committee should consider and adopt evaluation criteria for assessing proposals for Regional Initiatives (Annex I), decide about the regional initiatives that deserve approval as operating under the Convention in 2009-2012 out of the 16 proposals (three of them with conditions to be fulfilled by 2010), and consider recognizing two additional new initiatives as being under development.

The Standing Committee should also consider adopting the reporting format to be used by the approved initiatives for the years 2009-2012 (Annex II) and a model for national letters of support to regional initiatives (attached in Annex III) to be submitted by all Parties concerned. Finally, Standing Committee is requested to allocate the available funds from the Ramsar core budget line for regional initiatives to those asking for such support, noting recommendations included in the document.

1. Through Resolution X.6, the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP10) took a number of decisions regarding regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention during the period leading up to COP11 (2009-2012). They are briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.
2. Annexed to Resolution X.6, COP10 adopted “Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, which shall serve as a reference and to assess the operation of regional initiatives and their success” (quoted from paragraph 8 of Resolution X.6).
3. COP10 authorized the “Standing Committee to examine and approve, between meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, new initiatives selected from those which fully meet the Operational Guidelines [...] as operating within the framework of the Convention. Such new approved initiatives should be reported to the following COP” (paragraph 9).
4. The Parties agreed to “ earmark a global amount of financial support in the Convention core budget line ‘Support to Regional Initiatives’, as listed in Resolution X.2 on financial and budgetary matters, to be allocated to regional initiatives during the period 2009-2012, elements of which are either regional centres for training and capacity-building or regional networks for cooperation and capacity-building, or both, provided that they fully meet the Operational Guidelines” (paragraph 10).
5. COP10 decided “that the levels of financial support to individual initiatives for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 will be determined by the Standing Committee during its annual

meetings at the beginning of these years, based upon updated financial and work plans to be submitted in the required format and in good time prior to the annual meetings, and following the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance” (paragraph 11).

6. COP10 instructed “all initiatives under the present Resolution, and particularly those funded from the core budget, to submit to the Standing Committee annual reports on progress and operations of the initiatives concerned, and specifically on their success in fulfilling the Operational Guidelines” (paragraph 12).
7. COP10 also instructed “the Secretariat to develop for Standing Committee approval evaluation criteria and procedures for evaluations of the regional initiatives operating within the framework of the Convention” (paragraph 15), and instructed the Secretariat furthermore “to develop for approval by the Standing Committee the standard formats for annual, financial, and work plan reporting required from the coordinating bodies or mechanisms of regional initiatives” (paragraph 16). It requested “the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, particularly in relation to those initiatives funded by the core budget, to review their success and submit a summary report for consideration at COP11” (paragraph 17).

Evaluation criteria for regional initiatives and assessment of 2009 proposals

8. In line with the instruction in Resolution X.6 para. 15, the Secretariat developed suggested criteria to evaluate proposals for regional initiatives. These evaluation criteria closely mirror the 29 points of the Operational Guidelines, as annexed to Resolution X.6. The Secretariat proposes to SC40 to consider and adopt the evaluation criteria, as attached in **Annex I**, to use them to examine proposed initiatives, and to approve those initiatives that fully meet the Operational Guidelines as initiatives operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012.
9. To this end, the Secretariat has received in good time 16 proposals for regional initiatives corresponding to the required format. These proposals, as submitted, can be consulted at: http://www.ramsar.org/sc/40/key_sc40_doc10_add.htm. Thirteen of the initiatives covered in these proposals were already addressed by COP9 in 2005 through Resolution IX.7. Six of these proposals submitted in early 2009 concern ongoing initiatives which were already endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2006-2008 by COP9 (listed in Annex I of Resolution IX.7). They include the Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) hosted by Panama, the Partnership for the East-Asian Australasian Flyway, and the initiatives for wetlands in the West African coastal zone (WacoWet), Mediterranean (MedWet), High Andes, and Pacific Islands. These initiatives submitted short progress reports on their activities during 2008 to the Secretariat, also available at http://www.ramsar.org/sc/40/key_sc40_doc10_add.htm.
10. Four additional proposals concern the initiatives that were recognized by COP9 as having the potential for operating within the framework of the Convention, subject to further development (listed in Annex I of Resolution IX.7). They focus on wetlands in the Himalayan, Carpathian, and Nordic-Baltic regions and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) to be hosted by Uganda. Three further proposals concern initiatives that were noted in Resolution IX.7 para. 6 as being under development – these deal with wetlands in the La Plata and Nile river basins and the Black Sea coastal area. Finally, three

new proposals were submitted in early 2009. They concern the Ramsar Center for East Asia hosted by the Republic of Korea and initiatives for wetlands in the Caribbean and for American Mangroves.

Initiatives fully meeting the Operational Guidelines

11. The Secretariat has used the proposed evaluation criteria (cf. Annex I) to evaluate whether the proposals meet the Operational Guidelines. Based on this analysis, the Secretariat considers that the four ongoing initiatives listed below (which have already been endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2006-2008) and seven new initiatives “fully meet the Operational Guidelines”, as requested in Resolution X.6 para. 9. The Secretariat suggests therefore that Standing Committee approve these eleven initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012:

ongoing:

Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) in Panama
 High Andean Wetland Strategy (EHAA)
 East-Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership
 Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative

new:

Nile River Basin Initiative (NileWet)
 Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA)
 La Plata River Basin Initiative
 Ramsar Center for Eastern Asia in the Republic of Korea
 Himalayan Wetlands Initiative
 Carpathian Wetland Initiative
 Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet)

Arising initiatives with the potential to fully meet the Operational Guidelines by 2010

12. Based on the analysis outlined above, the Secretariat believes that three new proposals have strong political support in the region, and therefore the potential to become rapidly “operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan”, as recalled by COP10 in Resolution X.6 para. 1. These three proposals focus on wetlands in the Caribbean region, on American mangroves, and on coastal wetlands of the Black and Azov Seas.
13. However, the proposal for the development of a “Subregional Strategy for the Convention in the Caribbean Region” was not submitted in the requested format and is thus lacking information responding to several points of the Operational Guidelines. All three proposals, notably for wetlands in the Caribbean region, for the “Integrated Management and Sustainable Use of Mangrove Ecosystems in the Americas”, and for an “Initiative on Black Sea Coastal Wetlands”, plan for preparatory actions during 2009, intended to lead to the development of regional initiatives that will fully meet the Operational Guidelines, hopefully by the end of the year or soon thereafter.
14. Based on this situation, the Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee provide these three initiatives with support and further guidance, notably through its regional members directly concerned. It is suggested that Standing Committee’s approval of them “as

operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012” should be linked to the request that these initiatives will be developed during 2009 to the extent that they “fully meet the Operational Guidelines” by the time of submitting improved proposals in good time for SC41.

Regional initiatives with no new information provided and under development

15. Two initiatives were endorsed as operating within the framework of the Convention through Resolution IX.7 and received funding support from the Convention budget during the period 2006-2008. They concern the West African Coastal Zone Wetlands Network (WacoWet) and the initiative for the protection and wise use of wetlands of the Pacific Islands. This endorsement and Ramsar’s financial support provided these initiatives with substantial means to further develop and to prepare necessary elements to meet the Operational Guidelines, as shown in their preliminary proposals now submitted to the Secretariat in early 2009.
16. The Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee recognize the two initiatives for the West African Coastal Zone and the Pacific Islands “as being under development” and encourage them to submit complete proposals to SC41 in early 2010 that will fully meet the Operational Guidelines and potentially make them eligible for Ramsar core budget funding in 2010.
17. Unfortunately, and despite several reminders, the Secretariat was unable to obtain information in good time concerning three other regional initiatives “endorsed as operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention and considered appropriate for funding in 2006-2008” by COP9, namely ChadWet, NigerWet, and the Ramsar Center for Western and Central Asia in Iran. In the absence of such information, it seems unlikely that SC40 would be in a position to approve them “as operating within the framework of the Convention during the period 2009-2012”. Should they submit updated information in due course, SC41 may wish to approve them in 2010.

Format for annual financial and work plan reporting by regional initiatives

18. As instructed in Resolution X.6, the Secretariat has developed a standard format for the annual, financial, and work plan reporting which is required from the coordinating bodies or mechanisms of regional initiatives (**Annex II**). The Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee consider and adopt this or a similar format and instruct regional initiatives operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention to use it for annual reporting during the period 2009-2012.
19. The first regional “Collaborative structure for Mediterranean wetlands” (MedWet) was formally recognized as operating under the Ramsar Convention in 1999 by Resolution VII.22 (2002). At the same time, the Parties also approved the “Creation of a Ramsar Regional Centre for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere” through Resolution VII.26. Subsequently, by the time of COP9 in 2005, in Resolution IX.7 the Parties introduced the new principle that the formal endorsement of regional initiatives operating under the Convention was to be provided for a specific period leading to the next COP, and was to be dependent on regular reporting to Standing Committee through the Secretariat. For the current period leading to COP11, Resolution X.6 authorizes “the Standing Committee to examine and approve, between meetings of the Conference of the

Contracting Parties, new initiatives selected from those which fully meet the Operational Guidelines”.

20. In order to further facilitate this process, the Secretariat requested in its “Note to the Contracting Parties” in December 2008 that the Heads of national Ramsar Administrative Authorities of all Parties concerned by regional initiatives submit formal letters expressing their national support for the respective initiative. Heads of comparable government agencies of non-parties also concerned by an initiative, and possibly other institutional members participating in an initiative, were also invited to send such formal letters of support, according to the model provided for this purpose. The table below summarizes the number of such letters of support received in good time for the preparation of this document.

Name of the regional initiative	Number of national letters of support received	Total number of Parties covered by the initiative	letters of support received from non-parties, IGO, NGO members
Western Hemisphere Center in Panama	2	29	-
High Andean wetlands Strategy	3	8	-
East-Asian Australasian Flyway	2	10/17	-
Mediterranean (MedWet)	16	25	11
Eastern Asia Center in Korea	4	16	-
Nile River Basin	1	9	-
East Africa Centre in Uganda (RAMCEA)	1	3	-
Carpathian	7	7	2
Nordic-Baltic	5	9	-
West African Coast (WacoWet)	1	13	-
Pacific Islands	2	9	-
Himalayan	4	8	-
La Plata River Basin	3	5	-
Black Sea Coast	5	6	1
Caribbean	1	10	-
American Mangroves	3	13	-

21. The Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee adopt the model for such national letters of support, as proposed in **Annex III**, and encourage the Administrative Authorities in Contracting Parties who have not done so yet to submit such formal letters of support to the Secretariat at their earliest possible time.

Allocation of Ramsar core funding to regional initiatives in 2009

22. Of the initiatives listed above, eight of the proposals included a specific funding request from the Convention core budget.¹ In line with Resolution X.6 para. 11 (cf. above), the

¹ The funding request for the Pacific Islands concerns a specific workshop to be held in 2009 only, not activities directly related to the development of the regional initiative. In agreement with the

Secretariat suggests that Standing Committee allocate the available funding in the budget line “C. Support to regional initiatives” (Resolution X.2 Annex I) for 2009 as outlined in the table below. This table takes into account the specific requirements expressed in paragraphs 23-25 of the Operational Guidelines, and reproduced here:

- “23. 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, time-limited for a pre-determined period – in principle not more than 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. However, in cases where a regional centre continues to fully meet the Operational Guidelines such support may continue.
24. 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.
25. 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.”
23. The Ramsar core budget line “C. Support to regional initiatives” is subdivided into “i) regional networks (cooperation)” and “ii) regional centers (training & capacity-building)” with respective annual amounts earmarked of 179,190 CHF and 100,000 CHF. For the ease of calculation, where financial plans were not submitted in CHF (Swiss Francs) by the proponents, the following simplified exchange rates were used for US Dollars (USD) and Euros (EUR): 1 USD/CHF, 1.5 EUR/CHF. The table below is given in CHF.

regional initiative	total budget 2009-2012 (all in CHF)	Ramsar request 2009-2012	budget 2009	Ramsar request 2009	allocation proposal 2009	total Ramsar funding in the past
i) networks						
High Andean	unknown	66,000	201,623	22,000	22,000	64,000
Himalayan	300,000	100,000	75,000	25,000	25,000	none
Carpathian	211,500	150,000	73,500	37,500	37,500	none
Black Sea	unknown	291,000	66,000	66,000	44,690	none

proponent, the Secretariat therefore concluded that the costs of this workshop can be covered by other sources.

Caribbean	unknown	50,000	unknown	25,000	25,000	none
American mangroves	unknown	75,000	unknown	25,000	25,000	none
total for networks				200,500	179,190	
ii) centers						
CREHO center Panama	unknown	94,572	258,840	23,643	23,643	160,000
RAMCEA centre Uganda	400,000	100,000	151,000	85,000	76,357	none
total for centers				108,643	100,000	
Totals				309,143	279,190	

24. The combined requests by the above initiatives for support for the year 2009 from the Ramsar core budget overshoot the amount of available funding by slightly less than 11% (29,953 CHF).
25. Following the Operational Guidelines (and notably points 23-25 cited above), it is suggested that Standing Committee exceptionally allocate a contribution for the first year of a second interval between two meetings of the COP, to the Ramsar Center for the Western Hemisphere (CREHO) and the High Andean Wetland Strategy, which have already benefited from Ramsar core budget support during the years 2006-2008 (as indicated in the table above). This support should be provided with the condition that both initiatives rapidly become self-sustaining soon.
26. It is further suggested that Standing Committee allocate Ramsar core budget funding to the new initiatives for the Himalayan, Carpathian, and Caribbean regions and for American Mangroves as requested, in order to support them optimally during their crucial initial year. This support should be given with a view that it will allow the initiatives to become fully operational during 2009 and rapidly self-sustaining thereafter.
27. Given the necessity of bringing the funding allocations for 2009 into line with the budget available, and because the remaining two requests are substantially higher in absolute and relative terms, it is suggested that Standing Committee allocate to the East African Ramsar Centre (RAMCEA) and the Black Sea Coastal Wetlands Initiative slightly reduced funding compared to what was requested, as shown in the table above. This would still provide them with substantial financial support, sufficient to assure their development during the first crucial year towards becoming fully operational initiatives in 2010. This initial support should also allow them to become rapidly self-sustaining.
28. In view of future recurring and possibly new requests for funding from the Convention core budget during the years 2010, 2011 and 2012, the Secretariat proposes that Standing Committee adopt the attached format providing information on operational and financial planning (cf. **Annex II**), to be submitted to the Secretariat in good time prior to each annual meeting of the Standing Committee by initiatives that request such Ramsar funding.

Annex I

Evaluation Criteria for regional initiatives operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention 2009-2012

The evaluation criteria listed in the table below mirror the 29 points listed in the Operational Guidelines 2009-2012 for regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention, as adopted in Resolution X.6. For a better understanding, the 29 evaluation criteria listed below can be cross-checked with the respective points of the Operational Guidelines.

Individual points of the Operational Guidelines	Yes	No
1. The initiative is intended as an operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in a specific geographical region, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern.		
2. The geographical region to be covered by this initiative is defined according to the wetland-related needs of the relevant actors in the region.		
3. The initiative is intended to provide lasting, structural and operational support to facilitating and improving the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in a defined geographical region. It receives support from all or at least a significant number of Contracting Parties in the region concerned. Sufficient support is essential to setting up a minimal operational structure for effective work in the region.		
4. The initiative is fully consistent with the aims listed under 1-3 above and is different from a regional project . The initiative is not limited to a regional project or programme by several Contracting Parties focusing only on specific aspects, often limited in time. The initiative is not limited to specific aspects only, nor is it limited in time.		
5. The initiative has established, or will be establishing shortly, effective coordination between itself, acting regionally, and the Ramsar Secretariat, acting globally.		
6. The initiative is regularly reporting to the Ramsar Secretariat on its targets and operations, or has assured the Secretariat that it will do so. Regular reporting is essential to maintain links with the Secretariat in order to assure that global Ramsar guidelines are applied and that strategic and operational targets of the initiative are fully aligned with the Convention's Strategic Plan.		
7. The complementary roles of the coordinating mechanisms of the regional initiative and the Ramsar Secretariat have been defined in written agreements, or are likely to be so defined shortly.		
8. The initiative is provided by Contracting Parties, or other participating members, with professional services to assure a minimal coordination between the members participating in the initiative.		
9. The initiative aims to develop the capacity to take on the additional role of coordinating and supervising regional projects that are developed under the framework of the initiative.		

Individual points of the Operational Guidelines	Yes	No
10. The initiative has, or plans to have, professional staff who supervise regional projects and add substantial implementation capacity for the Ramsar Convention in the region.		
11. The initiative has established its own mechanisms to provide governance, advice and insight , involving all relevant Contracting Parties and other appropriate stakeholders.		
12. The initiative benefits from the support of a host country or a host intergovernmental organization, responsible to all members that constitute the regional initiative. Transparent governing and organizational structures are laid down in commonly agreed terms of reference, rules of procedure, or operational guidance.		
13. The regional initiative reports regularly to the Ramsar Secretariat on its activities and its general policies, or has assured the Secretariat that it will do so.		
14. The regional initiative is based on a bottom-up approach , seeking to involve all Contracting Parties in the region covered by the initiative.		
15. Not only the Ramsar Administrative Authorities, but also all other relevant stakeholders responsible for wetland issues, including the ministries responsible for the environment and water issues, intergovernmental bodies, Ramsar International Organisation Partners (IOPs), other NGOs, academia, local communities and economic actors participate in the initiative.		
16. The initiative bases 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.		
17. The initiative seeks collaboration with other intergovernmental or international partners and Ramsar IOPs operating in its region at an early stage.		
18. The initiative makes optimal use of the Ramsar Handbooks and Technical Reports and is based on strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions that are recognized as partners in the initiative.		
19. The strategic and operational targets of the regional initiative are fully aligned with the Strategic Plan of the Convention by means of policy and site technical work and activities.		
20. The regional initiative raises the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives. The initiative includes specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders in its work plan. The initiative communicates the outcome of such activities to the Ramsar Secretariat for use by the Ramsar CEPA Oversight Panel or is likely to do so.		
21. The regional initiative receives political support from all participating Contracting Parties and financial support from one or more Contracting Parties and other relevant partners in the region. Where it establishes a coordinating office, substantial support from a host country is especially important.		

Individual points of the Operational Guidelines	Yes	No
22. The regional initiative is (was) launched with secured funding for planned work, activities and projects.		
23. The initiative is asking for start-up funding from the Convention's core budget, in principle for not more than the interval between two meetings of the COP. The initiative indicates that it will be self-sustaining after that period.		
24. The initiative asking for Ramsar core budget support has submitted in good time a standard format report providing information on its operational readiness and the urgency of Ramsar core funding needs by the initiative during the coming year.		
25. The regional initiative has shown that it can generate its own resources and will become financially self-sufficient after an initial start-up phase and in the long term.		
26. The initiative has submitted a progress report to the Secretariat, according to the standard format and in time to allow adequate reporting to the next meeting of the COP, or [for new initiatives] assured the Secretariat that it will do so.		
27. The regional initiative requesting funds from the Ramsar core budget has submitted an annual report of progress and financial status to the Ramsar Secretariat in time for the preparation of the annual meeting of Standing Committee.		
28. The beneficiaries of the regional initiative have sent a short six-monthly progress report of activities and financial status to the Ramsar Secretariat, or [for new initiatives] indicated that they will do so in time in order that Ramsar funds can be disbursed.		
29. The Ramsar Secretariat disposes already of sufficient information from the regional initiative to assure that the initiative is operating within the framework of agreed work plans and following the approaches approved by the Convention through COP decisions.		
Totals		

Annex II

Format for annual financial and work plan reporting by regional initiatives

1. Title of the regional initiative

Recall the title of your initiative:

2. Work and activities undertaken during the year 200X

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 the year 200X

Provide a summary of income and expenditures:

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 200X:

Regional initiatives which receive Ramsar core budget support during the period 2009-2012 are requested to summarize briefly how this helped them to start and develop their initiative, and to clarify how they are becoming self-sustaining:

Annex III

Model for national letters of support to regional initiatives

1. The letter needs to be signed by the designated Head of the national Ramsar Administrative Authority and issued on formal letterheaded paper by this Authority. The original should be addressed to:

The Secretary General
Ramsar Convention Secretariat
28 Mauverney
CH-1196 Gland
Switzerland
2. An electronic copy of the signed original (preferably in PDF format) should be attached to an e-mail and sent to ramsar@ramsar.org and/or the electronic address of the Secretary General.
3. The text below is but a proposal. National Administrative Authorities are encouraged to adapt the proposed text below to the national and regional conditions and develop specifically the issues **boldened** in the model text below, where relevant.
4. Comparable Authorities in non-Contracting Parties, as well as other institutions actively participating and supporting a regional initiative are encouraged to submit similar letters of support.

Model Text Proposal:

Re: Formal support for Ramsar regional initiative X

Dear Secretary General

Our region XXX harbours a rich and important variety of wetland **ecosystem types**, such as XXX. They provide a number of **wetland services** to our society, such as XXX. We therefore strongly support the regional initiative XXX as a concerted, long-term operational means to provide effective support for the improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Wetlands and its Strategic Plan in our region.

We are prepared to provide this regional initiative with substantial **political and financial support**, also in-kind and through the provision of expert and staff time, according to the needs and operational procedures to be defined by the governing bodies of the initiative. We believe that the regional initiative XXX corresponds to the **Operational Guidelines 2009-2012** adopted in Resolution X.6 and remain available to **report** on its development to you, as required by Standing Committee decisions, and avail ourselves of the needed coordination between our Ministry and the Ramsar Secretariat.

Therefore, we invite the Standing Committee to favourably evaluate the proposal for the regional initiative XXX and to **endorse** it as operating in the framework of the Ramsar Convention for the period 2009-2012.

Sincerely yours

Head of the Ramsar Administrative Authority X
Contracting Party X