



## **Memorandum of Cooperation between The Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)**

### **Preamble**

Since its inception in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) has provided the single most important intergovernmental forum on wetland conservation issues. According to the Convention's mission statement, the Contracting Parties agree to "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

The Convention is founded on three pillars:

- Promoting wise use of wetlands,
- Developing international cooperation, and
- Developing a network of Wetland sites of International Importance.

The conservation and wise management of wetlands through the designation of wetlands for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, especially the obligation to maintain the ecological character of designated sites, deserves special recognition. This obligation recognizes the importance of wetlands for the maintenance of healthy and productive inland freshwater and coastal systems. Caring for water and wetlands, the Convention on Wetlands thus addresses issues which guide its Contracting Parties on ways to achieve sustainable development, promoting the role of wetlands in supporting life and livelihoods.

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) is an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) created in 1995 with the following objectives:

- To enhance the knowledge of biodiversity and natural resources in the Albertine Rift region;
- To promote awareness raising and conservation action for better sustainable use of the fragile natural resources of the Albertine Rift region;
- To enhance the conservation and protection of key biodiversity features of the Albertine Rift region for future generations and;
- To promote capacity building, networking, regional collaboration and information exchange for better conservation action in the Albertine Rift region and other mountain ecosystems in Africa.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "SK".

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "f".

ARCOS is registered as a charity and company limited by guarantee in the UK, Rwanda and Uganda, and operates in Burundi through a Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Burundi. ARCOS' Regional Coordination Secretariat is based in Kampala, with offices in Kigali and Bujumbura. ARCOS' focus is on collaborative conservation and sustainable development activities in the Albertine Rift region through biodiversity monitoring, information exchange, networking, capacity building, conservation action, policy work and supporting livelihood activities for the communities. The Albertine Rift stretches from the northern tip of Lake Albert in western Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, through western Rwanda, Burundi and western Tanzania to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika in northern Zambia. The Albertine Rift region, other mountain ecosystems and associated freshwater systems in the Great Lakes region are of particular importance for biodiversity and various services they provide to communities, yet they are under severe threat.

Ramsar and ARCOS share similar vision and wetland management goals. They both recognize the fundamental role played by wetlands in regulating and providing different kind of ecosystem services to benefit biodiversity and communities' health and livelihood; and they are also acquainted with the threats and conservation challenges wetlands are facing all over the world including human pressure and climate change effects and the need to save the remaining wetlands for long term benefits.

The purpose of the present Memorandum of Cooperation between Ramsar and ARCOS is to reinforce existing mechanisms in sustainable wetland management in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes regions, including partnership between ARCOS and the Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA) in the framework of the "*Stakeholders Engagement for Informed Decision-Making, Threat Mitigation and Sustainable Fresh Water Services Management in the Great Lakes Region of East and Central Africa project*" for which ARCOS engages stakeholders dialogue under the Great Lakes Freshwater Forum, and other initiatives.

The present Memorandum of Cooperation will serve as a basis to develop joint work plans and establish mechanisms for enhancing synergies and partnerships to achieve common goals whilst avoiding duplication of effort. These activities will relate to the Ramsar Strategic Plan currently in place.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (the Partners) agree the following:

**Article 1: The wise use of all wetlands in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes Regions**

The Partners will seek to reinforce the role of wetland ecosystems for sustainable development through their contribution to efforts on climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as the provision of clean water and a variety of wetland products that can be derived from the demonstration of integrated management approaches.

The Partners will promote and support the implementation of the major conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa (26 August - 4 September 2002), "the Future We Want" adopted by Rio +20 and the post 2015 Development Agenda.

SK

£

The partners will explore the possibility of reinforcing the institutional partnerships at the level of the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes Regions as well as partnerships at national level between all stakeholders - Governmental entities, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

**Article 2: Mobilization of funding resources for conservation and sustainable use of wetlands basin-wide**

The Partners will collaborate and work to ensure that projects for wetland conservation and wise use appropriately focus on the key role of wetlands for biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation - in particular through their provision of goods and services to the most vulnerable sectors of society.

The Partners will utilize the designation of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Sites) and management mechanisms to indicate priority areas for project development to maintain or restore globally important biodiversity.

**Article 3: Designation and management of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites)**

The Partners will explore the possibility of reinforcing the establishment of a coherent national and regional network of Ramsar sites in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes Regions, as the basis for their sustainable management.

**Article 4: International cooperation and transboundary management of shared water systems**

The Partners will collaborate on joint initiatives and on assessment of common challenges, and will take action on common solutions to transboundary issues in the Albertine Rift and Great Lakes Regions.

The Partners will promote transboundary wetland management initiatives at all levels, particularly with assistance of potential international donors and Government institutions.

The Partners will take into account innovative approaches to transboundary wetland management in the sub region, by promoting partnerships with other Conventions (The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), regional and sub regional organizations, Governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and any other relevant organizations, as models for global replicability.

The Partners will use the Convention's mechanisms for Ramsar site designation and management to promote transboundary cooperation in shared wetland ecosystems.



**Article 5: Funding**

The extent to which the collaborative programme and the joint conservation activities are implemented will be subject to the availability of resources.

**Article 6: Exchange of information**

The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and ARCOS will provide each other with details of their annual work programmes to ensure harmonisation of activities at global, regional and country levels. ARCOS and the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands will communicate agreement on common areas with their respective networks.

**Article 7: Obligations, Review and Termination**

This Memorandum of Cooperation constitutes an expression of a shared objective and vision. However, each party's actions will be considered to be that party's sole and separate action, for all purposes, and neither party shall claim to be acting on behalf of, or as agent for, the other party to this Memorandum of Cooperation.

The term for this Memorandum of Cooperation is five years. The agreement may be reviewed at the request of either party (usually annually) and may be terminated by either party subject to six months notice in writing.

For the Ramsar Convention Secretariat  
Anada Tiega  
Secretary General

For the Albertine Rift Conservation Society  
Dr Sam Kanyamibwa  
Executive Director

Signature:

Signature:

Date: 23-05-2013

Date 23/05/2013

