



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

Bucharest, Romania, 6-13 July 2012

Resolution XI.5

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

1. RECALLING that Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern;
2. AWARE that the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution VII.19, 1999) provide the appropriate framework for promoting international collaboration amongst Contracting Parties and other partners;
3. ALSO RECALLING that the Contracting Parties recognized the importance of Regional Initiatives in promoting the objectives of the Convention in Resolution VIII.30 (2002), and that Resolution IX.7 (2005) both endorsed a number of Regional Initiatives as operating within the framework of the Convention in 2006-2008 and recognized the potential of a number of other initiatives to become operational within the framework of the Convention;
4. FURTHER RECALLING that Resolution X.6 (2008) adopted “Operational Guidelines” for Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, and that these serve as a reference for assessing the operation of Regional Initiatives and their success (replacing the *Guidelines for the development of Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands* annexed to Resolution VIII.30);
5. NOTING that during the years 2009-2012, the Standing Committee has examined and approved a number of active Regional Initiatives as fully meeting the Operational Guidelines and noted the substantial progress made by many of the initiatives during those years, based on their annual reports submitted to the Standing Committee; and
6. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the experience gained through the operational years of those initiatives, both the regional networks and the Ramsar Regional Centres (RRCs); the successful application of the Operational Guidelines in selecting and supporting Regional Initiatives operating in the framework of the Convention; and the conclusions derived

from the review of their success with a strategic view for the future development of Regional Initiatives;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

7. REAFFIRMS the usefulness of cooperation at regional level through networks and centres for training and capacity building in providing effective support for improved implementation of the objectives and approaches of the Convention;
8. APPROVES the continued validity and use of the Operational Guidelines for Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention, as adopted for 2009-2012 and annexed to Resolution X.6, for the period 2013 to 2015;
9. INSTRUCES all initiatives approved by the Convention to submit to the Standing Committee annual reports on their progress and operations, and specifically on their success in fulfilling the Operational Guidelines, as well as to forward annual work and finance plans in the format adopted by the Standing Committee;
10. INSTRUCES the Standing Committee to continue to assess annually, based on formal reports submitted on time, the extent to which the existing Regional Initiatives continue to meet the standards of the Operational Guidelines and actively contribute to the implementation of the Convention;
11. INSTRUCES the Standing Committee to revise the guidelines on Regional Initiatives in such a manner that a precise evaluation of their activities and their administrative and financial management and long-term sustainability is possible and to use these new guidelines to determine the level of support (financial or otherwise) in the coming triennium;
12. AGREES to earmark financial support in the Convention core budget line "Support to Regional Initiatives", as listed in Resolution XI.2 on financial and budgetary matters, to be allocated to existing Regional Initiatives for development activities during the period 2013-2015, provided that they are determined by the Standing Committee to fully meet the Operational Guidelines;
13. DECIDES that the levels of financial support to individual Regional Initiatives for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015 through that budget line will be determined by the Standing Committee during its annual meetings, based upon updated financial and work plans to be submitted in the required format not later than two months prior to its annual meetings, and with the benefit of the specific recommendations made by the Subgroup on Finance;
14. STRONGLY URGES those Regional Initiatives that receive initial financial support from the core budget to use this support *inter alia* to seek alternative flows of sustainable funding, for example through trust funds, to strengthen their financial sustainability;
15. REAFFIRMS that, in accordance with Resolution X.6, financial support for Regional Initiatives from the Convention's core budget will, in principle, only be provided for a period corresponding to the interval between two meetings of COP;

16. DECIDES that financial support for Ramsar Regional Centres that meet the Operational Guidelines can be obtained for a period of up to six years in total;
17. DECIDES that Regional Initiative Networks that have already received financial support from the Convention's core budget for one triennium may have a three-year phasing out period, giving them the opportunity to find complementary means of financing their activities, and that financial support from the Convention's core budget will then cease;
18. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, intergovernmental agencies, International Organization Partners, national NGOs, private businesses, regional institutions and programmes of relevance to wetlands and other potential donors to support Regional Initiatives seeking financial assistance from the Ramsar Convention with additional voluntary contributions, to match Ramsar funding and ensure the financial sustainability of the initiatives;
19. INSTRUCES both Regional Centres and Regional Networks operating in the framework of the Convention to describe themselves as an operational means to provide support for the implementation of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention, but to present themselves with their own independent and individual identities to the public and other partners, in order to avoid any confusion in the public mind between these Initiatives and the different roles of the Ramsar Administrative Authorities at national level and the Ramsar Secretariat at international level, and REQUESTS the Secretariat to support and promote the value of the Regional Centres and Networks and facilitate those efforts to the extent possible;
20. INVITES all Regional Initiatives to sign a hosting agreement or similar appropriate instrument with their host organizations or countries within one year of their establishment, for the coming years in order to clarify the responsibilities in accordance with the Operational Guidelines;
21. ENCOURAGES the Regional Initiatives to maintain active and regular contacts and exchanges with the Secretariat, *inter alia* to assist in ensuring that the global Ramsar guidelines are applied and that the strategic and operational objectives of Regional Initiatives are in full harmony with the Convention's Strategic Plan;
22. URGES the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to explore ways of making good use of experiences from Regional Initiatives in its work;
23. EMPHASIZES the importance for Regional Initiatives to establish their operational governance structures in a transparent way, based on written terms describing their roles and responsibilities, to ensure that government agencies, research centres, NGOs and all other relevant partners are adequately represented in such structures, and to report on this to the Secretariat;
24. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties geographically related to a Regional Initiative that have not yet done so to provide support to the initiative and to signal this through the provision of formal letters of support and financial support, as appropriate;
25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, international organizations, international bodies, regional and subregional organizations to identify for possible inclusion among Regional Initiatives particular basins of global importance, such as the Amazon;

26. REQUESTS the CEPA Oversight Panel to work with the representatives of the Ramsar Regional Centres to identify and advise on the capacity building needs for RRC staff to optimize their performance, and REQUESTS the Standing Committee to assess the functioning of Ramsar Regional Centres in relation to the Operational Guidelines and the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015, requesting support from the CEPA Oversight Panel as required;
27. ENCOURAGES the Secretariat to support Regional Initiatives, to the limit of its means, so as to reinforce their capacity and optimize their management by identifying and providing support by official supporting letters, advice, and orientations about fundraising and implementation; and
28. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to prepare a summary report, based on its annual assessments, which reviews the operations and success of the Regional Initiatives operating during the period 2013-2015, for Contracting Parties' consideration at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.