



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy for development of draft of Operational Guidelines
for Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs)

1. BACKGROUND

The Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national and regional actions and international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of wetland biodiversity and services. It was the first of the modern global multilateral environmental agreements and is devoted to a specific critical ecosystem.

At the 13th meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP13, Dubai, 2018), in paragraph 1 of Resolution XIII.9 on *Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRI) 2019-2021*, the Parties recalled that "Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention, 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".

In paragraph 6 of Resolution XIII.9, the Contracting Parties decided that any RRI run jointly by several Contracting Parties for improved implementation of the Convention should comply with the principles listed in paragraph 8 of the same Resolution in order to be formally recognized under the Convention as an RRI, and that the Operational Guidelines adopted through Decision SC52-16 (2016) can be applied as appropriate for each RRI, taking into account that they will be revised at COP14.

In paragraph 8 of the Resolution, the Conference of the Contracting Parties decided that RRIs, to maintain their formal recognition as an RRI, must be in line with the following principles:

- a. RRIs must be endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, or intersessionally by the Standing Committee if they are new;
- b. RRIs must be subject to review by the Contracting Parties at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
- c. RRIs must develop terms of reference, which cover their own rules of procedure, structure, governance and membership, including the status of the Convention Secretariat's participation in the RRI, and which should be consistent with the Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Parties;
- d. RRIs must be financially accountable, with funds from the basic budget of the Convention and those obtained on behalf of the Convention.
- e. RRIs should undertake tasks related to the implementation of the Convention in their region and can speak in their own name only, using their own logo only;
- f. RRIs must submit to the Secretariat, according to the format approved by the Standing Committee, an annual report of progress on their work and a financial summary at the end of each year, together with a work plan and budget for the following year; and
- g. RRIs that have been established for fewer than six years and that want to apply for start-up financial support from the Ramsar Convention core budget must request it in their budget submitted for the following year;

In paragraph 9, the Conference of Contracting Parties re-established the (open-ended) Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group (the RRI-WG) under Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure, to draft new Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and submit their recommendations to the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting, which should include a draft resolution for consideration by the Standing Committee, taking into account the principles listed in paragraph 8 of the Resolution as well as the diversity of RRIs and their specific needs.

In Paragraph 30, the Conference of Contracting Parties instructed the Convention's Legal Advisor to review existing relevant Resolutions and decisions, identifying the ones that are inconsistent with Resolution XIII.9 and relevant decisions, and propose which ones should be retired or repealed; and it further decided that the results of the review may be shared with the RRI-WG, to be consolidated and presented for the approval of the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting (SC58), for inclusion in a new draft resolution on RRIs and subsequent retirement of relevant Resolutions, *inter alia*:

- Resolution VIII.30 (2003-2005),
- Resolution IX.7 (2006-2008),
- Resolution X.6 (2009-2012),
- Resolution XI.5 (2013-2015), and
- Resolution XII.8 (2016-2018).

Following this, the review of existing relevant Resolutions and decisions was conducted and is available as SC58 Doc 22.4.

At SC57 (Decision SC57-29), the Standing Committee requested the Secretariat to seek further guidance from the Convention's Legal Advisor on the legal status of RRIs and report back to SC58. The document is available as SC58 Doc 22.3.

At the SC58 intersessional meeting the Standing Committee took note in Decision SC58-29 of the recommendation of the Subgroup on Finance to pay special attention to the implementation of Decision SC57-11 and to the progress of the RRI-WG and the tasks entrusted through Resolution XIII.9, which include actions to improve transparency through new Operational Guidelines. It further considered the following actions to enhance the decision-making and oversight ability of the Subgroup of Finance on matters related to RRIs:

- Enhance the reporting requirements to improve their accountability, and good practices on financial management, as part of the Standing Committee's consideration of agenda item 22.2 at SC58; and
- Undertake a study of RRIs to better understand their impact, progress and effectiveness in assisting Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Convention, taking into account the report on the legal status of RRIs and the review of RRI Resolutions and decisions to be considered by SC58 in agenda items 22.3 and 22.4 respectively, to avoid duplication.

2. SCOPE

The consultant will draft new Operational Guidelines for RRIs, which should be coherent with the principles identified in Resolution XIII.9, paragraph 8, and which will enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the management and operations of RRIs. The consultant will include a table of indicators of effectiveness and impact that will allow the Contracting Parties that are members of the RRIs to evaluate the degree of fulfilment of the objectives and scope in the framework of the implementation of the Ramsar Convention at the regional level, through undertaking the following tasks:

- a. Conduct a review of each RRI's governance, financial management and transparency mechanism through an analysis of past annual reports submitted by RRIs, of their terms of reference, publications and other available information (e.g. websites, interviews with RRIs' coordinators or other representatives);
- b. Propose indicators of effectiveness and impact for agreement by the RRI-WG, and prepare an assessment of each RRI's effectiveness and impact in supporting implementation of the Convention;
- c. Review relevant Resolutions and decisions on RRIs; and
- d. Identify gaps and opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of RRIs based on the legal status analysis, review of existing Resolutions and decisions related to RRIs, and above-mentioned reviews.

3. CONSULTANT RECRUITMENT

The Secretariat of the Convention will oversee the process for recruiting a consultant to be appointed no later than November 2020. The Secretariat will invite applications from qualified candidates in response to these terms of reference. Interested candidates must submit a short proposal (maximum ten pages) including a detailed budget in accordance with the key selection criteria detailed in Section 4 below and the application requirements detailed in Section 5.

The Secretariat will receive and evaluate all applications and provide a shortlist to the RRI-WG Chair along with the justification of the selection made. The RRI-WG will review the Secretariat's recommendations within one week of receipt to recommend candidates for interviews. The RRI-WG Chair will coordinate responses from RRI-WG members. If necessary, a meeting of the RRI-WG will be convened to discuss the candidates for the interviews.

The representatives of the Secretariat, together with the Chair of the RRI-WG (via email or conference call) will form a panel to interview the candidates. Following the interviews, the panel will share its joint recommendation with the RRI-WG for a final decision.

4. KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Suitable candidates should demonstrate:

- Postgraduate degree in natural resources management, environmental policy or international relations;
- Understanding of multilateral treaty bodies and knowledge of the governance structure and modus operandi of large international organizations and/or multilateral treaty bodies;
- Familiarity with the scope, implementation and priorities of the Ramsar Convention and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);
- Expertise in researching governmental / intergovernmental processes and issues;
- Expertise in methods of fostering efficiency and productivity in organizations relevant to inter-governmental processes and structures;
- Demonstrated experience in analysing and interpreting both qualitative and quantitative data;
- Capacity in agile project delivery (or similar);
- Expertise in international corporate governance standards, guidance or principles;
- Fluency in English, with the ability to write professional and fit-for-purpose reports in English. Working knowledge of another language of the Convention (French or Spanish) is desirable.

5. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be in line with these TORs and must clearly set out:

- A broad project plan proposal for all topics identified in Table 1 below, including key tasks, method and timeline. The consultant may wish to propose a new breakdown and timeline of all topics into sub-topics for interim reporting;
- A detailed budget including:
 - total cost for all topics in Table 1;
 - cost for each individual task / topic, including time and personnel resources allocated to each key task; rates / fees of individuals allocated to each task;
 - disbursements (e.g. for travel);
 - other expenses.
- The consultant will need to indicate possible topics (as identified within these TORs) they may not be able to assess;
- Personnel specified to work on this consultancy;
- Daily rates for specified personnel;
- Details of other relevant consultancies / projects the consultancy team have completed;
- Details of two referees;
- The consultant will be required to declare the absence of any conflict of interest; and
- The consultant will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

6. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- The consultant should carry out their review by March 2021 in compliance with the budget allocation, as per Decision SC57-49.

7. WORK METHOD

- The work will be conducted by the appointed consultant under the supervision of the RRI-WG.

- The consultant will include a desktop review of relevant materials as well as, following agreement with the RRI-WG, direct consultation on relevant topics with Ramsar Contracting Parties and stakeholders, Ramsar's International Organization Partners and relevant national and international non-government organizations (NGOs) currently engaged in supporting the work of the Convention. The Consultant may also, following agreement with the RRI-WG, consult Secretariats (or equivalent bodies) of other Conventions.
- The consultant will apply an agile methodology to the Convention review by producing a report of not more than ten pages in length in English for each topic of the review by the deadlines detailed in Table 1 (once agreed by the RRI-WG and the consultant).
- The consultant will also produce a comprehensive body of deliverables in English as detailed in Section 9.

8. WORK SCHEDULE

- The review will commence by November 2020 at the latest. The Consultant will report to the RRI-WG Chair and Secretariat point of contact according to the deadlines detailed in Table 1 (once agreed).

Table 1 – Proposed work schedule

Start Date	Topics for Review	Deadline
Review Launch – November 2020	Full project plan and detailed methodology	30 November – 2 weeks after RRI-WG decision on selection
November 2020 to January 2021	<p>Governance, structure, and mandates of RRIs Analysis of the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and transparency of RRIs focusing on the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope and mandate of the RRIs, legal status, management body, governance structure, membership, rules of procedure, financial management; • Effectiveness and impact in supporting member countries' implementation of the Convention. <p>Relevant Resolutions and decisions on RRIs Identify gaps and opportunities to enhance the effectiveness based on legal status analysis, reviews of existing Resolutions / decisions related to RRIs, reviews of governance, structure, and mandates of RRIs.</p>	Report submission + possible interim reports on sub-topics agreed by the RRI - WG following consultancy indications
January 2021 to February 2021	<p>Development of draft of new Operational Guidelines for RRIs Draft of new Operational Guidelines for RRIs focusing on the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the above-mentioned topics; • The principles identified in Resolution XIII.9, paragraph 8. 	Draft submission

9. DELIVERABLES

The consultant's output to the RRI-WG will include:

- A full project plan once the review topics are agreed in full with RRI-WG (by 30 November or two weeks after RRI-WG selection decision);
- Sub-topic reports according to Table 1 deadlines (once agreed);
- A final comprehensive review of RRIs on topics in Table 1 including an account of the consultations undertaken and the list of key source materials reviewed; and
- A draft of the new Operational Guidelines for RRIs.

10. KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES / EXPECTATIONS

Consultancy deliverables must meet the quality standards expected by the RRI-WG and Secretariat before they will be accepted.

11. DATA SOURCES

The consultant should consider, among other things, the following:

- Existing documents reviewing the implementation of the RRI to be agreed with the RRI-WG;
- Standards / guidelines / legal documentation;
- Interviews with RRI coordinators or other authorized RRI representatives.

12. SECRETARIAT RESPONSIBILITIES

The RRI-WG is responsible for:

- Providing guidance to the consultant in relation to scope, direction and deliverables;
- Providing comments to the consultant on deliverables in a timely manner.

The Ramsar Secretariat is responsible for:

- Organizing the consultant recruitment process;
- Providing material requested and/or comments on deliverables to the consultant in a timely manner;
- Facilitating engagement with other stakeholders, as agreed;
- Administering this consultancy, and managing payments.

13. CONSULTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

The consultant is responsible for:

- Liaising with the Contracting Parties of the Convention agreed by the RRI-WG;
- Providing deliverables as set out in the agreed project plan by the RRI-WG;
- Notifying the Secretariat point of contact and RRI-WG Chair, as soon as practicable of any unforeseen delays.

14. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals are to be sent by email in Word and PDF format to iitsuka@ramsar.org by 23 November 2020. Any enquiries relating to these terms of reference should be directed to iitsuka@ramsar.org.