



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RAMSAR REGIONAL CENTER IN PANAMA, FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH ON WETLANDS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Wetlands fulfill important ecological functions by being primary agents in the development of the hydrological cycle, facilitating the regulation of water flows and its quality in the different habitats where this resource is essential for life, such as water basins, estuaries and coral reefs. In addition, these ecosystems are important for the development of economic and cultural activities of the local communities.

The importance of wetlands is such that they have facilitated the development of international agreements with the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) of which 33 countries in the American continent and the Caribbean are signatories and 380 wetlands of international importance have been designated, covering an area of 56,138,306 hectares, representing 29% of the world's most important wetlands. Since COP10, 62 new sites have been designated in the regions of the Americas covering an area of 2,689,604 hectares, and the surface area of four Ramsar Sites have been expanded in Bolivia (Los Lipez), Canada (Fraser River Delta) and Chile (Soncor Hydrological System and the Tara Salt Flat), which makes the recognition of the ecological, economic and social value of wetlands evident throughout the region.

Nevertheless, there are still big challenges, there is progress on wetland inventories in the region and some sites are already developing management plans that allow their conservation. However, there is a need to strengthen inventories and carry out efforts for the rehabilitation of degraded sites, bearing in mind that the participation of local communities and the private sector is essential. The Ramsar Regional Center in Panama for Training and Research on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere has contributed to the education of wetland handlers and has provided capacity for research development. CREHO has promoted the training of competent personnel for the study, management and custody of wetlands in the region.

In that sense, Panama's Ministry of Environment (MiAmbiente), as the Focal Point of the Ramsar Convention in Panama, is convinced of the importance of promoting training and research actions on wetlands that promote the application of the principles and technical guidelines of the Ramsar Convention, both in-country and in the region. Considering as well, the importance of wetlands for the development of nations, it promoted, managed and established the development of RAMSAR's Regional Training and Research Center on Wetlands in the Western Hemisphere at the City of Knowledge.



Approved by the 7th Ramsar Conference of the Parties in 1999, this initiative requires a management unit that facilitates the operation of said Center.

During the last ten years, the Government of Panama has contributed financially as well as by appointing personnel for backing the management of the center, guaranteeing the fulfillment of the objectives and functions for which CREHO was created.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

At the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of RAMSAR's Standing Committee (1997), Panama's permanent mission in Geneva presented the idea of establishing a wetland-training center, taking advantage of the benefits and facilities offered by the City of Knowledge. Welcomed by the attending parties, they urged the Government of Panama to develop the idea and establish CREHO.

It was the responsibility of the National Environmental Authority in Panama (Now Ministry of Environment) as the Focal Point of the Ramsar Convention, to present the proposal for the creation of CREHO to the different entities of the Ramsar Convention with the support of the Republic of Panama's Chancery. An initial proposal document was prepared, which was revised, improved and translated into English. The support and approval of the City of Knowledge and IUCN were also achieved. The proposal was presented at the Meeting (June 1998) and at the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee (October 1998) where the contracting parties decided to support the establishment of the Center and urged Panama to continue the initiative that was presented for approval of the Conference of the Parties, which was sanctioned by consensus.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), held in San José, Costa Rica from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1999 approved, by way of Resolution VII.26, the initiative to establish the Center and urged the Secretariat, the Parties and the Associated Organizations to support Panama in the development of the Center, given its importance for the application of the principles of the Convention and the contribution to the development of actions contemplated in its Strategic Plan.

During COP 8, held in Valencia, Spain, CREHO was established by consensus upon the signing of an agreement between Ramsar's Secretariat and the Republic of Panama, to contribute to the management of resources and the development of the Center.

From the beginning CREHO has had documents that sustain its creation, such as: a detailed and simplified proposal, summary brochures, mosaic of photos, presentation folder and it currently has a WEB page, training manuals, triennial plans, brochures for the promotion of trainings, an informative magazine, technical documents, training



modules, various presentations in PowerPoint, a scientific and technical regional information data base, library, photo bank, on-site and virtual training programs as well as a great variety of inputs that are valuable for wetlands' management in the region.

### **3. RATIONALE**

The Western Hemisphere, with its great altitudinal and latitudinal variation, presents an impressive diversity of wetlands that includes the extensive plains of Venezuela, arctic tundras in Canada, peatlands in Tierra del Fuego, coral reefs in the Caribbean and the Pacific, wooded swamps in the Amazon basin, the flooded pastures of Florida and the extensive mangrove swamps of the region. These wetlands of the Hemisphere exhibit all the ecological complexity that these ecosystems represent. Unique-to-the-world flora and fauna can also be found: dozens of species of fish limited to the Andean lakes, gigantic aquatic lilies in the rivers of the Amazon basin, springs in the Caribbean coast, and the mangroves of the Tropical Eastern Pacific and the Amazonian coast are just some examples of the endemic or endangered species found in these ecosystems.

Wetlands throughout the hemisphere also play an important ecological role, as they are essential components of the hydrological cycle, regulating flows and water quality in watersheds, with a preponderant role for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change. At the same time, these systems are of great importance to local and regional economies. Rural communities and cultures have developed, and for centuries, have been associated with these systems, benefiting from plants and animals restricted to wetlands. Many areas of the Hemisphere owe their cultural identity to these environments.

On the other hand, throughout the Western Hemisphere, there is a palpable need to encourage the training of competent personnel for the study, management and custody of wetlands, as recognized in Article 4.5 of the RAMSAR Convention.

The Executive Director should be able to meet CREHO's overall objective: "To promote research on the management and wise use of wetlands in the Americas, through training, development of impact assessment tools, methodologies and economic valuation as well as the establishment of communication mechanisms."

### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

1. Prepare and submit to the Board of Directors the Triennial Plan, Work Plan, Annual Center's Budget and the updated fundraising strategy for the center.
2. Act as a representative of the Center in the different actions that are required, as well as in judicial proceedings.



3. Plan, direct, organize, control and evaluate all actions of the Center in the technical, academic and administrative aspects.
4. Adopt the mechanisms required for the public knowledge and that of the national, international and regional scientific community regarding the activities carried out at the Center.
5. Manage and execute the budget of the Center.
6. Coordinate technical actions with the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention.
7. Inform the relevant Management Authorities of the Ramsar Convention in the region about the programs or activities developed by the Center.
8. Provide the Ramsar's Convention Office and the Standing Committee the annual technical and financial reports on the operations of the Center, subject to the prior approval of the Board of Directors.
9. Promote, coordinate and conduct national and regional seminars, conferences, courses, workshops, meetings and other related events for the expansion of knowledge on wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in accordance with the Center's competencies.
10. Apply the tools and rules that govern the development of administrative, technical, financial and legal actions approved by the Board of Directors.
11. Promote and coordinate the development of research and scientific studies to expand knowledge for the management of wetlands in the region.
12. Establish and implement a wetland management-training program for the education of professionals in the region on the handling, management, valuation and diversity of wetlands to promote the study, sustainability, management, custody and conservation of these.
13. Maintain the updated inventory of organisms, institutions, universities, regional research centers and non-governmental organizations engaged in aspects related to wetland management, conservation and research. Promoting synergism among these different initiatives, the Center aims to maximize the resources available for the conservation of wetlands in the hemisphere by identifying networks for coordination and information exchange.
14. Establish new strategic alliances and implement existing ones with national, regional and global institutions that promote research, education, conservation and training in wetlands, establishing collaborative agreements that promote the fundamental principles of the Ramsar Convention.
15. Continue to promote the development and implementation of evaluation and classification tools, monitoring programs and methodology of environmental impact assessments, climate change and economic valuation on the wetlands of the country and the region.



16. Strengthen the specialized information center by updating and collecting new information and updating the indexation of bibliographic information, database and geospatial information pertinent to the wetlands of the hemisphere.
17. Support the implementation of the resolutions and guidelines of the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR, Iran 1971) in general, and the identification of regional needs for training and research on wetlands in support of the Contracting Parties in the Hemisphere.
18. Implement the fundraising strategy and identify new partners and donors for financial sustainability of the Center.
19. Ensure the projection of the Center at the regional level, and involve the entire region in its activities, projects and initiatives

## **5. PRODUCTS:**

1. Work Plan for the triennium (2018 - 2020) with priorities, compliance indicators and budget with their respective implementation according to their schedule.
2. Updating and implementation of the Financial Strategy that identifies funding sources that allow the mid-to-long term sustainability of the Center.
3. Inform on new strategic alliances and projects with national, regional and global institutions that promote training in wetlands.
4. Updated capacity building program at national and regional level.
5. Reports on the Implementation of the Work Plan and Budget.
6. Annual work plan and Budget.

## **6. COORDINATION**

In the course of the work, the Executive Director will be responsible for the fulfillment of tasks, products and objectives and report on his/hers actions (accountability) to the Board of Directors in accordance with the provisions of the Organization's Board of Directors Regulations and at the ordinary and extraordinary meetings that are convened. The Executive Director will also maintain close coordination with Ramsar's Convention Office.



## 7. REPORTING

The Executive Director shall submit annual technical and financial execution reports to the Board of Directors in accordance with the Center's Work Plan approved by the Board of Directors. Likewise, he/she will present technical and financial reports during the Board of Directors' ordinary meetings, and those required by the Board of Director's at extraordinary meetings.

The reports will be presented in the format requested by the Board of Directors of the Center

## 8. EVALUATION

The Board of Directors will evaluate the performance of the Executive Director annually.

## 9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

1. **Academic Education:** University professional, graduated in environmental, social or economic sciences or public administration, with, preferably, a Masters and / or Doctorate level specialization in subjects related to the environment and / or management of related projects, with knowledge in international negotiations, planning and a high level of commitment to the environment and to sustainable development.
2. **Experience:** Minimum experience of 6 years in similar positions and in the management and administration of projects financed with international and local funds. Also in the management and selection of personnel.
3. **Nationality:** Must be a national of any country of the Americas.
4. **Language:** Fluent in Spanish and English.
5. **Skills:** Must have proven negotiating skills and be able to handle computers and its main programs. Experience in organizing and conducting trainings.



#### **10. CONTRACT DURATION**

An annual contract will be made for professional services. The contract may be renewable, depending on annual evaluation made by the Board of Directors.

#### **11. PROFESSIONAL FEE: US\$4.000,00 Monthly**

#### **12. OTHER BENEFITS**

- Financing for travel to wetland meetings
- Attendance to seminars and national and international congresses.

#### **13. HOW TO APPLY**

Interested candidates should send their CV and cover letter to [creho@creho.org](mailto:creho@creho.org) before June 30 2017. We encourage interested candidates to send in their application early. Interviews may be setup as CVs are received and reviewed.