

Agenda Item 8

Report of the Director General

The Council is invited to:

1. Take note of the present report of the Director General.

Note

1. In 2022, the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (COP14) endorsed Resolution XIV.19, welcoming the proposal by China, together with Cambodia and Madagascar, to establish the International Mangrove Center in Shenzhen. In 2023, the 62nd meeting of the Standing Committee adopted Decision SC62-22, approving the IMC as a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI). Since then, through communication and consultation with the 27 countries of the “Friends of the IMC” group, China helped build consensus on the establishment of the IMC and advanced the signing ceremony of the Establishment Agreement of the IMC. The signing ceremony was held in Shenzhen, China on 6 November 2024, where representatives from 18 countries jointly signed the Agreement. Pursuant to paragraph 1 of Article XIII of the Establishment Agreement, the Host Country is invited to establish an Interim Secretariat. The Interim Secretariat shall, prior to the formal entry into force of this Agreement, undertake all functions of the Secretariat of the IMC. On 20 December 2024, the Interim Secretariat was set up in Shenzhen.
2. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article VII of the Establishment Agreement, the Director General, with the assistance and support from its staff, shall be responsible *inter alia* to: facilitate collaboration among IMC Member States and coordination with the Secretariat of the Convention; develop the IMC’s foundational documents, as well as annual work plans and budgets; implement and report the strategic plans, work plans and budgets; support the logistical needs of Council and subgroups meetings; support and oversee other IMC offices; represent the IMC in signing legal documents and participating in international activities; and undertake other duties assigned by the Council.
3. This report covers the work undertaken by the Interim Secretariat during the period from 20 December 2024 to 26 July 2026. It outlines the main activities in 4 areas: to facilitate collaboration among IMC Member States and coordination with the Secretariat of the Convention; to develop the IMC’s foundational documents, as well as annual work plans and budgets; to implement and report the strategic plans, work plans and budget; and to support the logistical needs of Council and subgroups meetings.

Report of the Director General

I. Facilitate collaboration among IMC Member States and coordination with the Secretariat of the Convention

A. Promoting cooperation among Member States

1. On 6 November 2024, the Establishment Agreement of the IMC was signed in Shenzhen, China, with the first branch of 18 countries becoming signatory States of the IMC. The Interim Secretariat has continuously strengthened communication and liaison with Member States and signatory States, while further expanding the cooperation network through major international platforms, including the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (COP15). On 25 July 2025, Zimbabwe signed the Establishment Agreement during COP15, followed by the Republic of the Sudan on 25 August 2025. On 18 June 2026, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar signed the Establishment Agreement, bringing the total number of signatory States to 21. At the same time, the Interim Secretariat has been organizing side events, international training sessions, exhibitions, and exchange activities to promote communication and exchange among Member States and signatory States, to support future cooperation on mangrove conservation and restoration.

B. Strengthening coordination with the Secretariat of the Convention

2. To support the implementation of the Convention, the Interim Secretariat has strengthened working coordination with the Secretariat of the Convention and other RRIs, and has actively participated in COP15, Standing Committee meetings, the regional meeting for Asia and related activities. During COP15, the Conference adopted Resolution XV.5, approving the IMC as a RRI for the 2026–2028 triennium. The Interim Secretariat also co-organized side events and exhibitions with other regional initiatives, facilitating exchanges on the coordinated development of regional initiatives, the implementation of strategic plans and wetland conservation practices. The Interim Secretariat also participated in the inception report meeting for the scoping study “Plastic Pollution in Mangrove Ecosystems: Impacts, Mitigation and Policy Responses”, organized by the Secretariat of the Convention, and, as a member of the study’s advisory group, has helped advance cooperation on pollution risk assessment, scientific research and information sharing in mangrove ecosystems.

II. Develop the IMC’s foundational documents, as well as annual work plans and budgets

3. To support Member States’ participation in the governance of the IMC and to define the annual work priorities, the Interim Secretariat has prepared the IMC’s foundational documents, annual work plan and budget. These documents cover the IMC’s governance arrangements, medium- and long-term development, scientific and technical support, internal management rules, annual task and resource allocation. The

Rules of Procedure, the Strategic Plan (2026-2034), the Financial Regulations, the Human Resource Regulations, the Operational Guidelines for the Scientific and Technical Subgroup, the 2026 Work Plan and Budget will be submitted to the Council for consideration and adoption.

4. During the drafting process, the Interim Secretariat fully solicited views from Member States, signatory States and observers through online meetings, written consultations and email communication, and provided timely explanations and feedback. It also held consultations with the Host Country on annual contribution. These documents will provide the basis for establishing the IMC's governance framework and regulating the performance of the Secretariat's functions.

III. Implement and report the strategic plans, work plans and budget

A. Strengthening institutional development and service delivery

Enhancing the IMC's operational and service capacity

5. First, the IMC finalized the design of its official logo, providing a unified visual identity for external engagement and communication materials. Second, it established a bilingual Chinese-English website, offering stakeholders a channel to follow the IMC's progress and access relevant information. As of June 2026, the website had recorded over 70,000 visits and more than 17,000 page views. Third, it developed a digital office system and introduced bilingual administrative procedures in line with the operational standards of international organizations. Fourth, it further promoted the participation of the co-proposing countries in the development of the IMC by inviting director-level officials from relevant authorities of Cambodia and Madagascar to work with the Interim Secretariat in Shenzhen.

Expanding the partnership network

6. First, the Interim Secretariat strengthened international engagement and domestic cooperation. On important international agendas such as COP15, it held exchanges with ministerial-level officials from many countries, the Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, and representatives of international organizations on the IMC's development and cooperation in mangrove conservation and restoration. At the domestic level, the Interim Secretariat maintained active engagement with local government, universities, research institutions, non-governmental organizations and enterprises on research cooperation, capacity building and practical projects, and signed two strategic cooperation agreements. Second, the Interim Secretariat expanded the Observer network. In accordance with relevant procedures, the Interim Secretariat supported the admission of 13 institutions as observers of the IMC. It also supported the IMC in securing observer status with the Convention on Wetlands and the World Coastal Forum, and in being included in the APEC Experts Group on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade (EGILAT) three-year guest list.

Mobilizing resources

7. First, the Interim Secretariat sought support from the Host Country and the Host City, including voluntary contributions, project funding and arrangements for permanent office premises. Second, it coordinated resources from nature reserves, universities,

research institutions and high-tech enterprises to support international workshops and capacity-building activities for Member States.

B. Knowledge sharing and joint research cooperation

8. Organizing international exchange activities. Together with signatory States and partners, the Interim Secretariat organized a total of seven side events, thematic dialogues and seminars to promote knowledge sharing and the exchange of experience in mangrove and wetland conservation. These included:
 - July 23-31: During COP15, organized 1 side event and 1 exhibition, and participated in a joint side event, exhibition and meetings of RRIIs;
 - September 24: During the World Coastal Forum 2025, organized 1 thematic seminar;
 - October 9-13: During the 8th IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC), organized 1 thematic exhibition;
 - October 24: During the 2nd United Nations Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Week, organized 1 thematic dialogue session.
9. Developing knowledge products. In line with the IMC's objectives and the needs of signatory States, the Interim Secretariat compiled case studies on global mangrove conservation and restoration, conducted research on mangrove blue carbon trading mechanisms, and conducted an analytical study of the Global Wetland Outlook 2025, providing knowledge support for Member States in mangrove conservation and restoration, blue carbon projects and public communication.
10. Developing knowledge-sharing platforms. The Interim Secretariat organized the International Mangrove Wetland Lecture Series, inviting internationally renowned experts to deliver thematic lectures. 7 lectures have been held to date, with 500 participants, initially establishing a regular knowledge-sharing platform for practitioners worldwide.

C. Technology transfer, scientific and technical cooperation, and training

11. The IMC has developed the IMC Mangrove Atlas 3m (IMA-3M), a high-resolution mangrove mapping research output at 3-meter resolution, developed using advanced remote sensing and artificial intelligence technologies. It will be released together with the country-specific datasets and the report *The State of Mangroves in IMC Member States: A High-Resolution Baseline Assessment*. It provides a scientific baseline of mangrove distribution across IMC Member States and signatory States, and is intended for scientific, educational and non-commercial governmental use.

D. Education, information, communication, and public awareness mechanisms

12. To raise public awareness of wetland and mangrove conservation, the Interim Secretariat, together with the Host City and partners, carried out thematic exhibitions, public outreach activities, interactive events and bilingual communication activities on key occasions, including World Wetlands Day, the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, Tree Planting Day and the anniversary of

the signing of the Establishment Agreement of the IMC.

- January 17, 2025: held the Shenzhen thematic exhibition “Coexistence of Land and Sea: Mangrove Ecosystems in High-Density Urban Areas”;
 - March 12 2025: organized the mangrove tree-planting activity;
 - November 6 2025: organized the “Beauty in Diversity: International Mangrove Night 2025” public outreach event, attracting government representatives, experts, scholars, representatives of enterprises and civil society organizations, as well as general public from more than 20 countries;
 - February 2 2026: organized a public outreach activity for the World Wetlands Day 2026.
13. Completed the production of a five-episode documentary series, *A Mangrove Forest by the Sea*, which was launched on China’s national documentary platform on 2 February 2026 and also shown through public media channels, including metro media displays; produced 17 Chinese and English language short video introducing the IMC’s work and the ecological value of mangroves.

E. Capacity building and pilot projects

14. Organizing capacity-building training. The Interim Secretariat organized international workshops on mangrove conservation and restoration, using expert lectures, round-table discussions and field visits to build capacity in areas such as mangrove conservation, restoration, monitoring and assessment, and blue carbon trading. As of 30 June 2026, 6 workshops had been held, with the participation of 137 trainees from 30 countries.
15. Implementing pilot projects. First, the Interim Secretariat advanced bilateral project cooperation by signing capacity-building project cooperation agreements with Cambodia and Madagascar, and provided targeted training through international workshops in response to the specific needs of the two countries. Second, it improved the project support mechanism by studying and preparing measures for small-scale demonstration project grants, providing an institutional basis for future pilot projects for Member States.

IV. Support the logistical needs of Council and subgroups meetings

16. Ensuring financial support arrangements. Since 2023, the Government of China has provided approximately USD 5.59 million in total, including approximately USD 1.73 million in 2025, to support the establishment and initial operation of the IMC, international exchanges, capacity-building activities, preparations for the first meeting of the Council and other related activities. Through coordination with the Host City of Shenzhen, financial support was also provided for the participation of Council members and focal points from different countries, as well as for the organization of the meeting.
17. Providing meeting services and logistical support. The Interim Secretariat coordinated with the Host Country, the Host City and relevant institutions to make arrangements

for invitations, meeting documents, accommodation, venue set-up, equipment testing, interpretation and translation services, network and communication support, protocol and reception services, and field visits, so as to ensure the successful organization of the first meeting of the Council of the IMC.

18. Since the signing of the Establishment Agreement of the IMC, the Interim Secretariat has made progress in establishing and operating the IMC, supporting signatory States in participating in the development of the IMC, expanding international cooperation, and enhancing the visibility of mangrove conservation. Going forward, under the guidance of the Council and the leadership of the Director General, the Secretariat will continue to perform the functions entrusted to it under the Agreement, strengthen collaboration with countries, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and partners, and advance the conservation, restoration, wise and sustainable use of mangroves.

Annex

Expenditures of the International Mangrove Center for 2023-2025

Unit: USD thousand

Item	2023	2024	2025
1. Knowledge Sharing and Joint Research	2,007	1,857	1,724
2. Technology Transfer, Scientific Cooperation, and Training			
3. Education, Information, Exchange, and Public Awareness Mechanisms			
4. Capacity Building and Pilot Projects			
5. Institutional Development (administrative expenses, staff salaries, travel, and institutional operations)			
Total	2,007	1,857	1,724

Note: The financial expenditure information for the transitional period of the IMC has been compiled on the basis of internal consolidated statistics and is mainly intended to support the budget execution and financial management of the annual work plan. Any adjustments to the relevant data shall be subject to final confirmation.