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STUDY ON THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE RAMPAO NETWORK

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Finally, the project team would like to thank Dominique DUVAL Diop, Secretary General, for her constructive comments dated 14 May 2015, on the draft final report.

They are deeply grateful to one and all.

St Cergue, May 15, 2015.
## ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGA</td>
<td>Constitutive General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Marine Protected Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scientific Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRFC</td>
<td>Subregional Fisheries Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIBA</td>
<td>Fondation internationale du banc d’Arguin</td>
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<tr>
<td>MedPAN</td>
<td>Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean</td>
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<td>PRCM</td>
<td>Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation in Western Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAMPAO</td>
<td>Regional Network of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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FOREWORD

RAMPAO is a regional network of marine protected areas (MPAs) created in 2007\(^1\), which the goal is to maintain in good ecological condition, a consistent set of critical marine and coastal habitats, for the benefits of local communities living in and around MPAs at the sub-regional level.

Its members have the common vision to build "a coherent network of marine protected areas in West Africa, managed by strong institutions, under a participatory approach, promoting natural and cultural diversity to contribute to the sustainable development of the region".

The network covers 7 countries - Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone - and aims to:
- promote exchange of experiences and mutual learning;
- create synergies between MPAs on issues of common interest;
- make MPAs of the region functional and operational;
- strengthen mutual capacities in terms of advocacy, defense of interests and the representation of MPAs of the region at the international level.

1 - PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to deal with the options defined after discussions held in 2010\(^2\), to improve the institutional and financial sustainability of the network. It should also lead to some roadmap elements for each of the options that will be recommended in a general context where:
- most of the recommendations from the discussion referred to above, have been approved by the network General Assembly (GA) (Appendix 1)\(^3\), and some have already been implemented;
- others should be further developed\(^4\);
- one of the main partners of the network, FIBA has recently merged with the MAVA Foundation which is planning to stop its activities by 2022.

2 – CURRENT SITUATION

The network is based in Dakar, Senegal\(^5\) and its headquarters are located in the premises of MAVA which has been the major donor of the network since its creation.

It is desired to improve the sustainability of RAMPAO and to maintain it in particular on the following areas:
- its status;
- its management;
- its functioning;
- its resources;
- its capacities.

Recommendations will be made for each of these areas. But let us remind that the consultant has neither been authorized to evaluate the network, nor appreciate its performance for the past few years. However, its analysis should focus on the necessary arrangements that will make the adopted option, for the latter to be the most suitable one and meet at best and in practical terms, the expectations of the consulted stakeholders, and allow RAMPAO to be sustainable.

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1 Praia, Cape Verde.
2 Moser, 2011.
3 Report on 4\(^{\circ}\) General Assembly, 14-15 November 2011, Dakar, Senegal.
5 RAMPAO Secretariat, c/o FIBA MPA PROGRAMME Mamelles Rue 21-Ouakam - Villa n° F46, BP : 24939 Ouakam Tel : 221 338691043 Fax: 221 338600051.
E-Mail : secretariat@rampao.org
Finally, it appears from the information that the desired evolution should be “oriented towards enhanced institutional and financial sustainability and, if necessary, towards autonomy”\(^6\) and that the network empowerment process, which is a possible option should “be addressed with much care.”

3 - METHODOLOGY

The working methodology has helped to optimize two complementary approaches which show at best the expectations from stakeholders and put them within the general framework of the commission:

- a detailed review of documents provided by the Secretariat of the Network and people consulted, supplemented by the provider's own documentary resources (Bibliography);
- the consultation of about sixty stakeholders selected by the Secretariat after interviews conducted mainly during a mission of the Project team from 6 to 10 April 2015, through Skype, and by e-mail. Those consultations were held on the basis of a questionnaire validated first by the Secretariat (Appendix 2 and 3).

4 - ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

RAMPAO brings together natural persons and legal entities, full-fledged or associates members representing 27 MPAs to date, being in 5 out of the 7 countries of the ecoregion; the network functions as a platform for cooperation, set up since its creation on the basis of a simple will agreement between stakeholders, and based on the support for:

- a Charter adopted in 2007;
- Statutes also adopted in 2007 and amended in 2010\(^7\)
- Internal rules, adopted in 2013\(^8\).

Its management is organized around 4 bodies:

- a General Assembly, where only full-fledged members have voting rights\(^9\); the GA is statutorily chaired by a legitimate representative authority of an MPA of the GA host country and appointed by consensus for a period of 18 months;

- an Advisory Council consisting of 6 members, responsible for implementing the General Assembly decisions; on the proposal of its members\(^10\), this body was redefined in 2014 as Executive Committee "in charge of guiding and giving recommendations to the Secretariat as part of the implementation of the Assembly decisions and of its work plan"\(^11\);

- a Scientific Council, advisory, which also consists of 6 members, including at least 3 of the West African sub-region, appointed \textit{intuitu personae because of their qualifications}, by decision of the GA for a period of 36 months;

- a Secretariat which is currently managed by a Secretary General, supported by a team of 3 employees\(^12\)

The network activities lie within the framework of a “Work Plan for 2013-2016” designed around 4 specific objectives and 13 expected results after its implementation, which are, as a matter of interest:

\(^7\) Report of 3rd General Assembly, Nouakchott, Mauritania, 02-03 July 2010, appendix 3.
\(^8\) Around. December 2013.
\(^9\) Statutes, art. 8.
\(^10\) Report on the first meeting of RAMPAO Advisory Council, Dakar, 8 January 2013.
\(^12\) Head of Finance and Resources, Projects and Research Coordinator and Communication and Public relations Officer.
ensuring an efficient and sustainable management and governance of the Network MPAs;

- Improving the institutional and financial sustainability of the Network which is the key topic of the study; this objective has 4 expected results (Appendix 4);
- Improving the visibility of the Network and its members at local, national and international levels and facilitating communication and exchanges among members;
- Contributing to decision making for the strengthening of the Network ecological function through the integration of new MPAs, and the improved management of member MPAs.

The budget for the implementation of the work plan was estimated at an amount of 1.53 million Euros over the period, averaging 382.5 K Euros / year, of which 150 K Euros / year planned for operating and coordination costs. As a matter of interest, these estimated amounts take into account the network own funding and the funding from its technical partners.

For this reason, the Moser report recommended to keep the optimal amount of 220 K Euros annual budget over the period 2012 to 2017, or, for lack of sufficient funding, the amount of 110 K Euros / year corresponding only to the operating costs of the network Secretariat and governance bodies.

Since the network was first set up, this budget was provided to over 80% thanks to the support of 2 main donors, FIBA which has now merged with MAVA, and the Oak Foundation.

5 - OPTIONS

Whatever the option that will apply, it is important to note that consultations carried out have led to the unanimous agreement of stakeholders on:

- the usefulness of the network;
- the need to strengthen it

With this observation, two major types of possible options, drawn from the whole set of elements gathered throughout the study, can meet expectations.

5.1 - type 1 option - Host by an existing organization

Several options were discussed during the consultations:

- some of them like the cooperation of the network Secretariat with the Convention on Biological Diversity seems unrealistic;
- others are not adapted because of the fact that the organizations involved have mandates which greatly differ from that of the network, both on the geographical and material aspects; this is for instance the case of BirdLife International, Wetlands International or IUCN; these cooperations have sometimes been rejected during the consultations on the grounds that the network was clearly standing out from the other organizations;
- there are still others, on regional or sub-regional organizations, specialized and / or themselves encountering governance, operating and / or funding challenges, which would leave little hope for the improvement of the network sustainability if it was connected to them. This is particularly the case of the Sub regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) which covers just 6 out of the 7 member countries of the network and which has already been an institutional partner of RAMPAO since 2013.

13 Through “a territorial approach based on extensive and reliable knowledge on West African marine and coastal ecosystems, and economic, social and cultural processes”
15 Rec. 10
16 Source : Moser, 2011.
17 http://fr.mava-foundation.org/
18 http://www.oakfind.org/
19 Host by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversit, BirdLife International, Wetlands International, UICN, …
However, two options that were mentioned several times during consultations require further analysis.

5.1.1 – Cooperation with PRCM

Introduction

PRCM is a regional forum of stakeholders, partners in the conservation of the West African coast; it is supported by a strategic programme of actions for the period 2012-2017, implemented with the financial support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands until 2014 and also supported by the MAVA Foundation since its creation.

This forum is administratively hosted by IUCN, Dakar office, and governed by a membership charter; it is managed through a Steering Committee which consists of members gathered in 6 colleges.

Its field of action largely overlaps that of RAMPAO that is a partner. It is built around 4 priorities:
- the governance of coastal and marine area: its purpose is to contribute to strengthening good governance processes for the conservation of ecosystems and coastal and marine resources;
- the conservation of coastal and marine area and sustainable management of its resources: the purpose is to promote and implement effectively tools and mechanisms for the conservation of coastal and marine areas, the sustainable management and development of its resources;
- the analysis, prevention and management of risks and issues in coastal and marine zone: the PRCM action should enable better understanding of the risks and issues the littoral faces, their integration at all levels of planning and response, and the mitigation of their negative impacts;
- the mobilization and coordination of the Partnership, in view of the enlargement, sustainability, mobilization and coordination of the network of actors in the region in order to achieve at best the set objectives.

In short, PRCM has played a major role in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Marine Protected Areas, and has contributed largely to the setting up of the network.

Strengths and weaknesses of such an option

PRCM neither holds a legal status nor a legal entity status.

Like RAMPAO, its sustainability and security, from a financial and institutional perspective, are hardly guaranteed and depend mainly on the decisions of the host organization, IUCN, its donors too, MAVA and the Kingdom of the Netherlands which besides, withdrew in December 2014.

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20 Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal.
21 Partnership agreement on 1st April 2013.
22 national civil society stakeholders, government bodies, national and local politicians, Fisheries Professional organizations, research and education actors and international NGOs.
23 RAMPAO currently 7 international partners including the PRCM (http://www.rampao.org/view/fra/international.php) and 18 national partners from countries covered by the network (http://www.rampao.org/view/fra/national.php)
Its governance and operation do not bring more guarantee than RAMPAO currently has, and which is established by the decision from the governments of 7 countries.

The cooperation of the latter with PRCM could not therefore fully meet the expectations of the RAMPAO stakeholders.

In addition, it is also at a turning point in its development and its future should soon be diagnosed at organizational level in order to improve its operation and efficiency.

However this cooperation could, be an intermediate step towards the empowerment of the network over the next 2 years, after which the future of PRCM will also be decided.

Therefore, it might be interesting to define the institutional evolution of RAMPAO in the framework of this study which will later focus on PRCM and seek between the two systems possible synergies of action and pooling of resources or assess the opportunity of combining the these systems into a single status, to benefit a unique programme of action for the conservation and management of coastal and marine environments.

At this stage, it was not possible to consider the option, but it was found necessary to raise on this occasion the relevance that would be created, at the sub regional level, one and the same organization dedicated to the conservation of coastal and marine environments, at which marine protected areas directly contribute to and which would bring together the two existing systems between PRCM and RAMPAO.

Such guidance could probably help establish the autonomy of the institutional framework in general and enhance the clarity, effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives in this field, across the sub region for implementation.

In the short term and whatever the evolution option of the RAMPAO may be, the cooperation, in particular the territorial and logistics ones of the two systems, could also help establish the autonomy of the network, if not legally, at least de facto, towards its major donor that is MAVA.

This cooperation could also help to free the staff of RAMPAO Secretariat from their current employment frameworks and status with the donor, by noting however that the PRCM staff is now reporting to IUCN.

Conclusion

If ever the cooperation of RAMPAO with PRCM, with the current institutional status of the latter, would only meet the expectations partially, this would however somewhat make sense and allow RAMPAO:

- to start its empowerment process in the short-term, even from logistical and administrative standpoints (sharing the same office, sharing facilities and services, ...);
- not to exclude the legal empowerment of the network in the medium-term, on the basis of a status to define.

Such a cooperation could easily evolve into a possible merger with PRCM, in a more strong organization, a greater institutional and financial sustainability since it would have to consolidate the overall consistency of actions to strengthen synergies and to gather resources, for example in terms of information systems and exchanges, facilitation and mobilization of stakeholders, and also management of human resources.
Such an option, however, presupposes that the conclusions of the PRCM organizational diagnosis will allow such a development, which is likely to lead to effectiveness and efficiency in the outcome for both current systems.

5.1.2 – A cooperation with the Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention

Introduction

The Abidjan Convention is relating to cooperation in terms of Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West Africa and Central regions; and it covers both the geographical and material environments of RAMPAO.

This is an international treaty which came into force in 1984, bringing together the States Parties into a common system which focuses on the fight against pollution, coastal erosion, specially protected areas, the change in the impact on the environment and the scientific and technical cooperation.

To this end, the contracting parties “shall take, individually or jointly, appropriate measures to protect and preserve the unique and fragile ecosystems and species habitat and other lives impoverished, threatened or endangered. ... They endeavour to establish protected areas, including parks and reserves, and to prohibit or regulate all activities likely to have adverse effects on species, ecosystems or biological processes on these areas.” This mandate, although larger, is directly in line with the purpose of the network.

All States represented in RAMPAO are now parties in the Convention except Cape Verde; however, this situation does not create any great and nullifying constraint to bringing the two systems together.

The Treaty also provides opportunities for parties to sign regional or sub regional agreements, in order to ensure the protection of the marine environment and the coastal areas in West and Central Africa. For example, this type of agreement between 6 States parties is planned for the conservation of mangroves, based on an existing Charter for sustainable management of mangroves; the current process should lead soon to the simplified signing of an additional protocol to the Convention.

The Convention also has decision making bodies and an Executive Secretariat currently managed by a regional coordination unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), based in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, moreover in a non-member country of RAMPAO. The Executive Secretariat could probably meet the administrative and logistical needs of the network at the cost of a few capacity adjustments and accommodate a technical unit especially dedicated to MPAs.

The network could even continue to exist as such in the Convention, to have its programme, its funding or its decision making and advisory bodies. This structure would also mutualize some posts, including administrative and accounting ones, and especially technical means.

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24 Parties Conference Board.
25 Provided that the decisions in question are then validated by the decision-making bodies of the Convention.
The cooperation of RAMPAO with such an organization would be legally possible and relatively easy if the States Parties decide it, the same States that have signed the RAMPAO member’s Charter when it was first set up. Moreover, we can further note how the current network fundamentals, members’ charter, statutes and rules and regulations could be reviewed in the form of an additional protocol to the Convention, while preserving the meaning and spirit.

Finally, the cooperation of RAMPAO with the Convention will theoretically help improve its financial sustainability from the moment that:

- the Contracting Parties owe the Convention a subscription;
- the latter has a trust fund;
- the image of the Convention and the security it can provide to partners, may facilitate raising external funds.

From a formal point of view, the question should be first submitted to the authorities of the Convention for approval, on prior decision from the general Assembly of RAMPAO.

**Strength and weaknesses of such a decision**

The states were involved in RAMPAO since it setting up\(^{26}\); connecting the network to the Convention is legally relatively simple and can be fast from the moment that:

- RAMPAO General Assembly would request it;
- Decision-making bodies of the Convention would make that decision.

In such a case, the next meeting of the Convention Board scheduled in June 2015 could be the opportunity for RAMPAO current partner of the Treaty, to inform that body of that possibility to be considered, waiting for the next Conference of Parties to be held in 2017, and that will be a reasonable period of time to prepare properly the change for RAMPAO.

If this scenario would theoretically improve administrative and financial sustainability of the network, a number of limitations should however be noted among other things for fact that it does not lead to the formal empowerment of the network but more to its merger within the structure of the Convention, and possibly at the expense of its visibility.

Furthermore, the apparent benefits to be expected should be modulated; indeed:

- the flexibility of conventional systems is not usually obvious; their functioning is often rigid and heavy in facts, contrary to the expectations expressed by those consulted for this study;
- Convention is currently facing difficulties in securing its own funding and in particular in collecting the member’s subscriptions\(^{27}\); In addition, UNEP announced its gradual withdrawal in the coming years
- the Executive Secretariat which has been recently established as UNEP Regional Coordinating Unit is still new; it should grow stronger and get developed before becoming fully operational;
- Currently, the institution does not have proven experience on the protocols since it has just begun to experiment them. It is expecting a return on experience that will be possible to gain only in the medium term.

Finally, unlike RAMPAO which mission is to implement technical programmes of action related to the management and conservation of marine protected areas, an international convention is primarily an institutional mechanism and is generally not intended to intervene at operational level, unless it is in cooperation with its technical partners to outsource such actions with them.

\(^{26}\) See the Members Charter signed by government representatives.
Conclusion

Like the previous one, this option seems possible, relatively easy and attractive to some extent; however it cannot lead to the legal empowerment of the network, and, in the best case, will just ensure a relative functional autonomy without actually improving its administrative and financial sustainability, for which the Convention itself and its bodies are still working.

The status of an implementing partner appears to be the most logical position of RAMPAO towards the Convention in the short term, like other organizations which focus on the operational field of the conservation of the living species\(^\text{28}\) in the sub-region.

For all those reasons, cooperation of RAMPAO with the Convention is therefore considered premature; it could be reassessed later on, depending on the development of the latter. However, a partnership agreement seems quite suitable but is not quite relevant to the point.

5.2 - type 2 option – legal autonomy

Without having unanimous support during interviews and consultations, this option seems, however, preferred by the vast majority of stakeholders, notwithstanding the fact noted by many of them:
- it should be applied with caution;
- result from a cautious progression;
- go through intermediate stages of evolution;
- require in all cases, adjustments of the governance, functioning, priorities and intervention capacities of RAMPAO.

In this respect, the Central Africa Protected Areas Network (RAPAC) set up in 2000, under the current status of an international, non-governmental organization\(^\text{29}\) sub-regional and non-profit, is a good example of constraints and risks that derive from poorly controlled growth, too fast and unbalanced, which, in this case, the network scope of business combined with a status which is not appropriate and a lack of involvement of national stakeholders, have quickly exceeded the organization institutional and even financial level of maturity.

Among other examples, the conclusions of the organizational, institutional and financial review of the network, carried out in 2012, show mainly\(^\text{30}\):
- the host country agreement was not signed 12 years after it was set up;
- governance has led, over the years, to some weakening of decision-making within the organization;
- unorthodox distribution of powers between the bodies created relative confusion in the respective roles of those entities;
- the Scientific and Technical Committee has struggled to function well;
- national administrations were not involved enough in the life of the organization;
- its positioning compared to other regional organizations was poorly organized;
- technical credibility of the network was to be strengthened, alongside other more specialized partners;
- expectations from the network exceeded by far human resources capacities which were available for its implementing bodies;

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\(^{29}\)Current statutes adopted on 15 February 2013.

\(^{30}\)AGRECO, 2012.
finally, the volume of activities and the corresponding funding have also
clogged up the organization over the years.

However, it is not the merits of the independence of the organization which is at issue,
but the scope people wanted to give it in a relatively short time, during which, beyond the
frailty and lack of institutional maturity of the organization, it is also the big volume of
business and the financial resources available that have clogged up the system and
required adjustments after the event.

Whatever the option, stakeholders must be fully aware of the existence of a number of
risks resulting from such initiatives and which should be assessed at the beginning of the
improvement process initiated and throughout its cycle, so that everyone has full
consciousness of prerequisites required by the comparison of the current network to the
conditions for its long-term development. (Box 1).

| · Lack of appropriation by the national and local stakeholders |
| · Lack of direct contributions of national and local stakeholders to the network functioning |
| · Lack of interest and/or despondency from partners |
| · Change in partners’ priorities |
| · Difficult geopolitical context |
| · Administrative constraints relating to hosting the network |
| · Opacity of roles and responsibilities between the governing bodies |
| · Lack of dynamism of governance bodies |
| · Absence and / or lack of clarity of the roadmap of the network, of governance bodies and of the General Secretariat |
| · Lack of coordination for the network |
| · Lack of internal coordination and cooperation between bodies |
| · Insufficient and / or inadequate human capacities of the network |
| · Insufficient and / or unsuitable technical capacities of the network |
| · Scheduling of activities insufficient and / or poorly adapted to the context |
| · Insufficient or excessive financial capacities |
| · Network area of intervention unclear and / or unsuitable |
| · Discrepancy between the services offered and the stakeholders’ expectations |
| · Lack of visibility of network actions |
| · Lack of control for the use of the brand and logo |
| · Insufficient personalization of the network alongside its partners and members |
| · Excessive ambition and / or poor planning of activities |

Box 1 – list of indicative risks relating to the network and its activities.

Introduction

The legal independence will give to the network the image of an organization liberated,
able to raise funds, which seems to be the central objective of the stakeholders consulted
on what they call “financial sustainability”.

This option would also provide the most complete answer to the empowerment of the
organization, thus meeting the wish clearly expressed during the consultations that
RAMPAO gradually moves away from its partners and other international organizations in
place, to govern itself independently.

However, RAMPAO legal empowerment will not succeed in the medium term, regardless of
the status selected, if it is not supported by a sustained effort for recognition, ownership
and therefore involvement of network members, taken over by support from partners.
These are two key conditions to achieve this change.
The complex stakeholders’ expectations are as follows:

- minimize the overheads and operating costs; optimize de facto the use of information technologies\(^{31}\) in order to reduce costs including the organization of meetings, taking into account the realities and constraints of the sub-region;
- make the governance clear and simple; on this occasion, review the current reference framework which is complex and unclear;
- improve radically the networking among members; develop the role of coordination played by the Executive Secretariat and the support to network members;
- design an operational action plan which focuses on the priorities set according to the needs expressed by managers of MPAs, and based on a strong logical framework;
- have a communication strategy prioritized on managers of MPAs, policy makers and users; refocusing it on the network MPAs and for its activation;
- develop formal partnerships, including scientific and technical, with regional and international organizations involved in the management of MPAs and sustainable use of their resources.

From a legal point of view and considering the purpose of RAMPAO and the nature of its activities, it is not recommended to use the legal statutes of organizations which activities are mainly economic and/or commercial.

Creating an international organization would require the adoption of a new treaty, although still possible, but seems to go beyond the immediate issue. Such a prospect may be reviewed in the long term, and assuming restructuring within the PRCM; it is not recommended in the short and medium term given the heaviness of such a process which we cannot even see the immediate benefits over other options which are simpler to implement.

It is also recommended to select a type of status:

- flexible and which allows the extension to other stakeholders from the seven (7) countries of the network sub-regional area of intervention or in the longer term, the large Canary Current, notwithstanding the fact that such an extension is premature as long as the network is not stabilized and secured;
- which allows a gradual radiation of the network internationally where it could eventually become a center of excellence, in niche activities to advocate around the support to the management of MPAs.

The status of non-profit organization, national or international, seems more appropriate, taking into account:

- the purpose of RAMPAO which focuses on activities of general interest;
- the nature of its activities which are not primarily commercial
- its governance and its current way of functioning which are already close to that of an association;
- the status of its members, bringing together natural persons and legal entities based on the public and private laws of several countries;
- the flexibility of such status under domestic law, regardless of the subregion countries involved;
- the various funding opportunities offered eventually by such a status

Countries of the network generally offer the possibility of using such an organization, notwithstanding slight differences sometimes noticeable, from one country to another, on:

- the relatively easy administrative way of creating such an association by simple registration, declaration or authorization, as appropriate;

\(^{31}\) Conference Calls, Skype ....
the possibility to make it work effectively and develop, with flexibility, rules of reporting and administrative control being sometimes significantly.

For the record, the legal frameworks of the countries offering such a possibility are the following:

- Cape Verde: art. 51 of the Constitution and Law No. 28 / III / 87 on associations;
- The Gambia: art. 25 (1-e) of the Constitution;
- Guinea Bissau: art. 55 of the Constitution, Civil Code and in particular DM No. 23/92 of 23 March 1992 on the setting up of NGOs;
- Guinea: art. 10 and following of the Constitution and Order No. 72 / PRG 86 March 7, 1986 on the definition of NGOs;
- Mauritania: art. 10 of the Constitution, amended Law No. 64/098 of 9 June 1964 on associations;
- Senegal: art. 8 of the Constitution and Law No. 68/08 on the Civil and Commercial Obligations Code (article 811 and seq of.);
- Sierra Leone: art. 5 and 26 of the Constitution and regulations relating to Community based organizations.

It is therefore not only on the existence of such status under domestic law that the Network host country will be selected.

To achieve this, it is recommended to use a set of indicative eligibility and attractiveness criteria of (Table 1) to objectively distinguish between offers, after a invitation to tender like the one used for example by the Abidjan Convention to host its Emergency Coordination Centre for marine pollution.

A Selection Committee, which should convene important people who are not part of the network, should lead this process of competition and participate in the selection of the network host country.

<table>
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<th>ELIGIBILITY</th>
<th>ATTRACTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Be a country in the sub-region represented in the network.</td>
<td>Easy access from other countries of the sub region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a member of the network.</td>
<td>Quality of IT/Internet connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a political stability and a peaceful environment</td>
<td>Administrative time frame to set up the association and support from local authorities for its registration in domestic law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be in line with other regional, sub regional and relevant international legal instruments in the field of marine protected areas management.</td>
<td>Tax arrangements for the association and its staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be able to work with the network to improve the management of marine protected areas</td>
<td>Host facilities provided to the network Executive Secretariat and standards of accommodation and equipment (offices, meeting rooms, IT and conference calls equipment, ...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Express clear political will to maintain and develop the network and its activities</td>
<td>similar experience at national level</td>
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Table 1 – indicative selection criteria for the host country.

Strengths and weaknesses of such an option

If from the academic point of view, this option meets at best the network empowerment and improvement of its institutional sustainability objective, this status cannot by itself guarantee its financial sustainability, nor can it ensure that its governance and functioning will be fully satisfactory, compared to the current context.
Indeed, beyond the choice of the option, to improve the sustainability, it is the way it will be implemented which matters.

Among all the status, the association is probably the one that conceptually brings greater autonomy and ensures greater structural flexibility.

However, its advantages are also its weaknesses or shortcomings. The public authorities have often been reluctant as regards the association status especially when it comes to bringing together government authorities and private stakeholders to fulfil missions of general interest, conducted through activities funded partly from public funds, and according to the rules of governance giving public actors the decision-making role.

It has led in some cases to abuses such as *De facto management*, which can lead an official who is member of the network and who do not have the status of public accountant to make in good faith some transactions involving funds or securities belonging to the association and drawn from public funds, which only public accountants are exclusively legally authorized to carry out.

The grievances against the associations are generally motivated by a transparency that can be relative, relating in some cases to an opaque administrative and financial functioning. In addition, they are sometimes criticized for a lack of proportionality between their legal capacity, the nature of their activities which are much extended, and the limited degree of control they are generally subjected to.

However, those shortcomings are also what makes the interest of the association structure and guarantee its flexibility mentioned above; Furthermore, a number of safeguards can prevent such abuses, including using methods of partnership based on target agreements and/or resources between public authorities and associations. Without getting into details on these issues which will be addressed in due course, such conventions can indeed provide sufficient guarantees to public partners who will have in this contractual framework enough levers for them to ensure that the association is developing activities in line with their priorities, without claiming a major decision-making role in its governance. In this case, they will avoid the risk of putting themselves in an illegal situation of *de facto management*.

The degree of autonomy of the association is at the heart of this discussion and therefore, if such an option was chosen, stakeholders should pay particular attention to the rules of governance and internal functioning which govern the decisions of the association.

They should pay great attention to the drafting of the statutes which shall be sufficiently clear to prevent any situation of dominance, including from whatever the donors. They shall also provide that the association will develop its activities in partnership with other stakeholders, including its members if need be, and its public members if any, in clearly set frameworks of objectives, of means, of use of those means and control of their use in particular, organizational and operational in general.

In fact, the rule is that the statutes of the association allow to prevent any exploitation of the association by the public authorities or, conversely, of public authorities by the association.

Differentiated subscriptions, the definition of the categories of members, their rights, their fair distribution by college, offer among other rules, endless adjustment options that respond partly to the requirements and should be discussed in due course.
These precautions, apparently complex are in practice easy to take and are in the interest of all parties; they have just been raised at this stage of reflection to ensure that the current rules of governance and functioning of the network, which revealed in the study a number of shortcomings, are reviewed and clarified and if necessary, updated in accordance with the associations law for any kind of host country.

Conclusion

This option has the advantage of having shown that it could work and meet local expectations, within a sub regional framework and bringing together state members and international, public and private members around the issue of the "Ecological monitoring for natural resources management"

In this respect and with all the caution required by this analogy, the association "Ecological Monitoring Centre for natural resources management" set up in Senegal for more than 20 years now, can be source of inspiration.

Without going into the details of its statutes set on a model conceivable in most of the other countries of the network, this association has a simple governance, organized around a General Assembly, a Board, host a partnership Advisory Committee and is open to the scientific community, mainly for the definition of its scientific and technical orientations.

An Executive Board appointed for a fixed period, manages and promotes the centre's activities; the General Manager is supported by technical (1) and finance and administrative (1) staff.

Its resources are traditionally drawn from founding members’ allocations, income from those allocations, grants, and benefits from services provided.

The idea that RAMPAO should strengthen its technical expertise to the benefit of the network MPAs managers, including for the assistance in project management and in fundraising, and provide benefits paid by members and partners, fits well into such format. However, this should be out of the non-profit nature of its activities which is recommended to be kept, at the risk of getting the association described as a commercial business and subject it therefore to a generally less favourable tax regime.

The option of the association, in contrast to that of the Foundation which could also be considered but which could be heavier, less flexible and would require immediately a capitalization effort probably unbearable by members and partners, is a possible option and likely to meet local and donors’ expectations, provided a number of preconditions are met.

6 – PRELIMINARIES

The preliminaries only related partly to the option that will be chosen, will be expressed below under objectives to achieve and actions to be fully taken along the process; their necessity appeared during the study, in particular through consultations and should play a leading role in the company’s success.
6-1 Capitalize on the network achievements

Without ever questioning its usefulness, people who have been consulted often wonder about the network achievements directly for managing member MPAs who are also asking the question. This report seems partly to be related to the fact that, until recently, the network did not have its own financial resources, considering that activities they implemented were almost exclusively those funded by donors, bringing some confusion about their respective roles. This question leads in passing to recommend in future the setting up of regulations for the use of the network’s logo to prevent any drift and in any case make sure that the network fairly benefits from its activities.

Over past years, the communication seems to have been mainly directed to strengthening the external image of RAMPAO, to a lesser extent to managers of MPAs. Let us not forget that this orientation directly derives from one of the specific objectives of RAMPAO Work Plan for the current period.

This analysis should also be modulated by the fact that it’s not quite obvious to set up communication technology links with stakeholders from the network, and that their reactivity requires a big effort to lead the network, which needs to be strengthened in the future.

To make it useful in the internal reflection process, this capitalization should be carried out in the coming weeks in order to improve the network’s sustainability and better understand the needs in this field; it can be done internally as an assessment of the actions carried out that will help to objectify the progress achieved.

6-2 Define a communication strategy

This goal echoes the previous recommendation, mentioned several times in the deliberations reports of its bodies and RAMPAO in general, it meets the wish of those who have been consulted, in particular members of the network to retain in the future the three priority targets:

- the very managers of MPAs, waiting for support from the network on technical issues relating to the technical management of MPAs; achievements of MedPAN, Network of Marine Protected Area managers in the Mediterranean, could provide inspiration in this regard;
- local decision-makers whose positions directly affect the preservation of MPAs and the sustainable use of their resources; the economic value of MPAs could be an preferred input (Environmental Goods and Services);
- users of marine resources and their professional bodies; fisheries and tourism are key sectors, frequently emerging from discussions. Partnerships should be formalized with these stakeholders under target agreements and means mentioned above.

This recommendation is just reiterating a need repeatedly expressed in the past; it only comes within the topic of this study and is only justified because external communication can help to strengthen the legitimacy of the network and therefore help in establishing both its institutional and financial sustainability.

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1 CR de la 5° AG.
2 OS 3.
3 Cf. including the minutes of the first meeting of the Advisory Council of 8 January 2013, the minutes of 3rd and 5th GAs.
5 Ex: thematic seminars, technical guide, managers forum, ...
6 See among others the recent publication of WWF on the wealth of oceans and the very rich documentary sources available on the subject.
6-3 Review the reference frame of the network
Since its creation, the network is based on a membership charter, statutes changed later and internal regulations recently adopted.

The prospect of a reform in the system should help:
- to simplify this reference frame;
- to clarify and update it;
- ensure the compatibility of these elements\(^7\).

Whatever the option, the process under way should lead to review such documents in order to increase their readability and thus enhance their understanding and their use.

6-4 Clarify governance issues and the role of different bodies

In order to improve efficiency in the governance of the network, the Moser report made a series of recommendations most of which have been adopted and some of them already implemented; among other things these are for reference\(^8\):
- the creation of an “Advisory Committee”: this idea was put forward at the 4\(^{th}\) GA in November 2011; This Committee has a mixed mandate addressing at the same time the role of an association “Office” responsible for “ensuring the implementation” of decisions at the meeting of the GA and the Board of Directors, and that of “advisor” with the Executive Secretariat and FIBA\(^9\); It consists of associated network members and by right, a donor, the President of RAMPAO and the Executive Secretariat, in an advisory capacity. It met once in January 2013 and has been transformed upon its members’ request, in an “Executive Committee” in the Network Internal Rules\(^{10}\);
- the possible transformation of associate members into partners of the network or the revision of admission criteria for members of this category; This issue has not been settled during the 4\(^{th}\) and 5\(^{th}\) GA; it’s still creating debates;
- Assessment of the GA decision-making process and the possible adjustment to that process; like the previous one, the subject is still being debated and should be addressed. Here again, the current process could help to revise the current operating rules of the network for a fair distribution of competencies and powers between its different bodies;
- Maintaining or revising the frequency of GAs: the ratio of one GA every 18 months has not been challenged to date; however in the future it should respond to legislative constraints that may impose a statute of the association according to a yearly basis.

At this stage, we can note the dissatisfaction of stakeholders against the governing regime and the persistent of difficulties or even confusion regarding the respective roles of different bodies\(^{11}\), their composition and representativeness of members.

In response to this and in particular if the option of legal autonomy came to be adopted, the governance of the network could be organized around 4-5 bodies to be discussed:
- one GA that giving validation;
- a Board of Directors that defines the strategy and giving orientation;
- probably a Steering Committee to ensure the implementation;
- a Secretariat for the implementation at the operational level and giving advice;
- a Scientific Council which provides scientific and technical advice.

Such outline meets the requirements mentioned above; it should be discussed and adjusted in due course to the option that to be finally adopted.

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\(^7\) Especially between the statutes and internal rules.
\(^8\) Recs 1 to 5.
\(^9\) Merged since December 2014, with the MAVA.
\(^{10}\) Note that this body does not exist in the statutes of the network as revised and adopted in the same year.
\(^{11}\) For example a GA making “recommendations” (minutes 3, 4 and 5 GAs) or Advisory Council making “decisions”.

6-5 **Strengthen the technical response framework**

The technical response framework of RAMPAO is currently based on the object and purpose of the network defined by the membership Charter and Statutes; it is built around six strategic objectives defined in “strategic directions and Work Plan” adopted for 2013-2016.

Thirteen (13) results are expected from RAMPAO after this period of activities that should be evaluated in due course.

The initiated process to improve the institutional and financial sustainability of RAMPAO is therefore at the end of a multi-year period of activities which should lead stakeholders to design in the next coming weeks, both:
- the content of the next program of activities for the network;
- terms for implementation and funding.

The analysis of the context as much as the comments of stakeholders consulted, advocate in favor of more concentrated RAMPAO activities on improving the actual management of MPAs.

In the future, this should encourage stakeholders to strengthen scientific and technical support to the network for managers of these areas and thus identify with them beforehand the priority management issues to be addressed; such work has been initiated in previous works\(^\text{12}\) and by the Scientific Council, which has made operational recommendations in previous GAs.

To better meet the expectations of managers on the one hand and optimize the human and financial resources of the network on the other hand, it is recommended to define the content of the next programme activities of the network and directly connected to MPA managers; indeed they should play a central role in this process.

This programme should also confirm the existence of a sub-programme for small grants such as the one recently established likely with some success, dedicated to the activities carried out directly by managers.

During this period of the network’s change members claim a progressive empowerment of RAMPAO that will be able to be addressed by the Executive Secretariat. That would be a test in nature in order to measure the capacity of stakeholders to translate their ambitions in the concrete, and gradually expand the network more independently.

Such an exercise would also facilitate the fundraising from donors:
- secured by the operational nature of this action programme;
- the pragmatic approach chosen;
- sought risk minimization;
- a moderate commitment over a reasonable period, in line with the same calendars as donors, including the MAVA.

This programme should meet the usual requirements and standards in this area, also meet the classic assessment criteria; reference will be made to these methodological frameworks available from major international donors.

Given its nature, such a design work should be part of a 3-month calendar and be completed no later than in early autumn, in order to be able to get interest from potential donors from the year 2016 if possible. The preliminary enrolment of usual donors of the network in such a process will surely secure the evidence of the first results to be expected.

In conclusion, once empowered, the network would have three fiscal years (1) successfully complete its transformation, (2) reach a certain level of maturity, and (3) start improving financial sustainability.

This process should be conducted in parallel while improving the institutional sustainability of the network.

6-6 Optimize human resources around prioritized functions

The Executive Secretariat of the network exists since 2012 and is functioning independently, including frameworks that are always related to MAVA, to statutory and financial perspectives. This body has grown over the last two years; currently it comprises four good standard frameworks, addresses the needs expressed to date by the members. It has also met recommendations from the Moser Report.

Unfortunately the current context raises once more the question about the profile of the Secretariat, with a view to improving its financial sustainability in particular, but also the restructuring recommended above before launching its technical activities:

Operating costs of the Secretariat now account for a reasonable share of the total budget of the network, for an annual amount of about 91 K Euros according to the Moser report, however, taking into consideration that the accommodation costs of the network now hosted by the local office of MAVA are currently reduced.

The issue is therefore not to reduce or increase them, except making a few adjustments whatever the option in case there is a change - recommended - in the network address, but it rather deals much more with the adequacy of expertise areas of the staff according to priorities and technical requirements referred to above, which can be summarized as follows:

- reinforce the scientific and technical support of the network with managers in terms of MPA management;
- have a strong internal expertise in program and project management and control all stages of the project cycle;
- have a proven knowledge in fundraising and strong experience in relationships with donors;
- benefit from a greater ability to run a network and catalyze stakeholders, members and partners.

The current process should also lead to assess the adequacy of the resources developed for these priorities; members of the Secretariat have been recruited on fixed-term contracts expiring at the end of 2015; thus it is the appropriate time to make such an assessment which may require revising the employment frameworks as necessary, and / or identify adjustment programmes on skills and training sessions for current executives if need be.

In all cases, it is strongly recommended to readjust the employment frameworks in favour of strengthening the scientific and technical expertise in areas prioritized above. The possible cooperation with the PRCM, whatever the nature (sharing premises, equipment or even services), could also help to reduce the operating expenses and to pool some functions, particularly administrative and accounting ones.

6-7 Secure the funding

The Financial sustainability of the network is at the heart of current discussion; recent and future developments regarding the position of former “donors” of the network makes the subject even more relevant.
Because of this change, the Moser Report recommendations in this field are partly obsolete.

The search for financial security, key to the sustainability of the network led to make four main recommendations in line with those mentioned above:

6-7-1 **Invite members to contribute to the funding of the network 6-7-1**

This recommendation clearly emerged from consultations, although neither the level of these contributions, nor their conditions, have led to responses unanimously shared by the stakeholders.

However, several complementary paths should be followed in this respect:

- **institute a membership fee** on a base that will be defined, and leading to equitable contributions, in line with members’ ability to pay. For the record, the Moser Report recommended the total amount membership fee to be around a quarter of the operating expenses of the network which would represent in its current situation a minimum annual fee of around 700 Euros/MPA\(^{13}\);
- provide paid services upon request of members and partners: then the network would become a specialized service provider that members could contact if need be for any service relevant to its field; such an approach would also help to strengthen the value of the network with managers who have not perceived its value yet\(^{14}\);
- develop contributions in-kind, both for hosting the network and the organization of its statutory or exceptional events \(^{15}\).

6-7-2 **Involve Trust Funds and other regional financial instruments**

There are currently 2 operating trust funds involved in member countries of the network and which work focuses on financing the management of protected areas: BacoMAB in Mauritania and Fondation BioGuinée Guinea Bissau.

It would be better for RAMPAO to involve these instruments in order to examine what could be their support both for the functioning and activities of the network.

6-7-3 **Build a reserve fund from allocated budgets of network activities**

These funds should be built up progressively from administrative and operating costs charged by the network, on programs and projects undertaken in general on the volume of its technical activities.

The effort is still limited given the current operating costs of the Secretariat and different bodies of the network being around 130/150 K Euros according to estimates from Moser Report, especially as these costs are likely to be reduced by eventual pooling previously advocated.

If these costs are established on a flat fee base of 14% from the cost of programs and projects corresponding to an average level and acceptable for administrative costs, compared to other organizations, it would lead the network to eventually develop a minimum annual turnover around 1 million euros, which should be deducted from the total contributions and other resources, being a level consistent with the current volume of network revenues.

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\(^{13}\) The rate of this contribution could be set according to the standards or rules applied by international organizations (ex. : Scale of the United Nations or IUCN).

\(^{14}\) Cf. the need for capitalization mentioned above.

\(^{15}\) Ex.: seminars, forums, technical workshops, ...
Such a blueprint would however require the support of donors in the 3 - or even the next 6 years and preferably as recommended by the Moser report - to gradually boost network activities to an acceptable level, and generating sufficient financial support.

6-7-4  Build a business plan

The recommendation above, also suggests that a business plan should be made in order to improve the financial sustainability of the network.

Strategic guidelines and Work Plan of RAMPAO for the 2013-2016 period included a budget framework including a cost estimate and based on the assumption that the Executive Secretariat would finance all or part of the planned actions, without questioning how itself and its actions would be funded.

That conceivable approach was due to a favorable financing environment, secured by usual partners of the network, and that can not continue because of the changing context.

Therefore, such a business plan is of utmost importance for the success of the reform to be undertaken, and should support the next RAMPAO action plan.

Besides these recommendations in order to improve the financial sustainability of the network, many other innovative formulas and mechanisms could be recommended to secure the resources of the latter.

Why not imagine actually resorting to tax instruments, payment systems for environmental services, sponsorship or creation of a special fund as suggested by the Moser Report, or many other tools still studied by RAMPAO as part of the “toolbox” available to its members, and the analysis it conducted on the subject, in order to strengthen the financial sustainability of MPAs Member\textsuperscript{16}?

In response to this question, three comments have been made:

- all these mechanisms directly adapted to MPA may not be the case for a network;
- some are long and complicated to implement, not in line with respect to the short and concrete deadlines it requires;
- the first choice that has been made was to prioritize a classic, simple and realistic approach, at a critical moment where RAMPAO must also reform according to the institutional point of view and find a new stability, even if, when it manages to succeed its transformation, the network will eb able to experiment other more innovative financing instruments if desired.

7 – ROADMAP

The following roadmap was established taking into account previsional calendars of the main stakeholders a priori likely to be involved in the process, and the option that would be adopted.

7-1  General agenda

As far as possible, it would be better to complete the entire process by the end of the first quarter in 2016.

This is an ambitious objective, but achievable; this is the basis on which have been established the following indicative chronograms.

\textsuperscript{16} The Environment and Development Group, 2010.
If such an agenda seems to be difficult to implement, the current Work Plan of the network would be achieved by the end of 2016, in order to allow the network to have some flexibility to complete this process which term should not exceed that deadline.

The achievement of this schedule also partly depends on the option that will be adopted. Among other scenarios one could have for example: a cooperation of RAMPAO with the Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention is linked to a decision to Meeting of Parties which next session is scheduled in 2017; cooperation with PRCM or the creation of an association ex nihilo, these could help to follow mainly shorter schedules.

It is therefore highly recommended to quickly launch first the consultation process of members in order to choose the best scenario. Then, actions to be taken and their schedule will depend on the latter. This consultation does not necessarily imply that all documents and records related to the option to be immediately available. They can be provided as the process goes on; keeping in mind that the option should be formally adopted preferably at the next general meeting of RAMPAO, scheduled this autumn, which requires a prior agreement framework from them.

In short, the ideal schedule would be as follows:

- consultation of members on recommendations of the current report, and selection / validation of the option June / July 2015;
- adoption of the option at the next GA of RAMPAO, September 2015;
- possible invitation to tender in order to host the network in October 2015;
- examination of tenders and finalization of institutional documents, in November December 2015;
- Possible Constitutive General Assembly for the creation of an association, or finalization and the signing of affiliation agreements, January / February 2016
- implementation of the new option, no later than March 2016.

7-2 Methodology

The institutional and financial issues are partly related to the technical programming the network’s activities.

In the content, two approaches should be initiated simultaneously, but with similar discussions substantially planned on different schedules:

- the choice of the option, the preparation of draft documents to which they will be connected and their adoption (see above);
- preparation of the next action plan of the network at the end of the current one.

In order to ensure consistency between the two approaches, it is recommended to consider the monitoring of the overall process under the authority of the Executive Committee of RAMPAO, in its role of guidance and adviser entrusted to it by the GA of network members in 2011, with the administrative support of the Executive Secretariat. The question of external methodological support will be addressed if necessary.

Thus, the Executive Committee should have the terms of reference:

- conduct the consultation of members on the choice of the final option for adoption at the next RAMPAO GA, including issues about hosting and / or location of headquarters for the network;
- also prepare for the next GA draft papers to be the reviewed reference document of the network (clarification and simplification of existing documents, charter / statutes / internal rules, content according to recommendations above);
- develop a three-year technical action plan for RAMPAO in connection with managers and with the scientific and technical support of the Scientific Council, including its detailed logical framework. It is highly recommended to start this discussion this summer, in line with projected schedules of partners, in order to result in a comprehensive document to submit for the adoption at the next GA;
• lead any other prior necessary activities required for the good achievement of the process.

7-3 Actions

7-3-1 Conduct the consultation process of members about the selection of the final option

It is proposed to undertake this consultation under 7 steps:

• step 1: a first analytic work of the Executive Committee, the conclusions and recommendations of this report, especially from the perspective of the recommended alternative strategies;
• step 2: a site visit of the Executive Committee President, with the Secretary General, in each country of the network; This visit should allow the presentation of the conclusions of the study and the recommended guidelines by the Committee and collect a first positioning of network members on these guidelines;
• step 3: a job of developing the discussion of the Committee, iterative and participatory, in connection with members; this stage should conclude with the finalization of a draft decision on the final option, to be submitted for adoption at the next GA;
• step 4: presentation of the final draft at the General Assembly for adoption;
• step 5: invitation to tenders for hosting the network (assumption Association);
• step 6: Examination of tenders and finalization of institutional documents;
• step 7: implementation of the GA decision (finalizing agreements with the host country in the case of an empowerment option or with the host organisation in case of a cooperation).

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RAMPAO GA

Table 2 – Tentative schedule Action 1 (Year 2016).

NB : Steps 5 and 6 should be shorter in the case of the option of connection with PRCM, and much longer for a connection with the Secretariat of the Abidjan Convention; in the latter case, it should inform as soon as possible the Convention Bureau about the internal process undertaken by RAMPAO, if possible before June 2015.

7-3-2 Prepare and finalize the drafts of documents constituting the reviewed referential framework of the network

This action should be divided into two main steps:

• step 1: preparation of documents;
• step 2: adoption in Constitutive General Assembly of the association in the case of option 1, in a simple RAMPAO GA in the case of option 2;
• step 3: creation of the association (if that option was selected).

Whatever the adopted option is, mainly some cleaning up and consistency in current texts should be developed - Membership Charter, statutes and internal rules.

It is recommended to assign this task to a “corporate lawyer” advice, and ensure rapidly that working documents are available for the Executive Committee highlighting possible
alternatives, particularly in terms of membership\textsuperscript{17}, governance\textsuperscript{18} and financial resources\textsuperscript{19} in order to improve its discussions with members, in keeping with the schedule of Action 1.

This action is expected to have enough draft documents to be submitted for adoption at the next General Assembly in September 2015.

The formal decision for a possible creation of an association shall be taken at a Constitutive General Assembly. Although preferred, it is quite impossible to hold that assembly just the day after the next General Assembly of the current network in September 2015. Indeed it should adopt the statutes of the new association and therefore decide about its head office, which, at least should be known in late December 2015, except if the schedule of the invitation to tender, going through the offers and the finalization of institutional documents, proposed over the period October / December 2015 is moved forward.

Therefore it seems more reasonable to set the CGA and anticipate the finalization of documents and national related procedures for the creation of the association, in the first 2016 quarter.

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Table 3–Tentative schedule Action 2 (Years 2016-2017).

This schedule would probably be shortened if the connection option - or the possibility of creating an association in the country hosting the current network was adopted without any tender.

7-3-3 Design a three-year technical action plan for RAMP AO in connection with MPA managers

The current RAMP AO Work Plan will end in late 2016. The study also showed the need to redefine the next action plan on priority issues of MPAs management identified in perfect collaboration with managers.

It was previously recommended to design the program as part of a discussion seminar involving the MPAs managers of the network; this meeting should be organized by the Executive Secretariat and with the participation of members of the Scientific Council. It could have an tentative period of 2-3 days and supposed to lead to the drafting of a program logical framework:

- designed around 3-4 action constituents at least, directly inspired by management subjects of network MPAs;
- relating to cross-cutting themes in particular and common to managers;
- with a realistic number of activities to be undertaken during the next 3 years, in cooperation with the latter.

If needed, an external support will be requested in order to lead and facilitate this work, and support actors in formalizing their expectations.

\textsuperscript{17} Should we yes or no keep the associate members?
\textsuperscript{18} Which bodies and which competence?
\textsuperscript{19} Should we have contributions, if yes, what are the rules to set them?
Then it is recommended to organize this meeting in early autumn at the latest, for the plan:
- to be adopted at the next Network GA;
- to be communicated to partners for possible support, within reasonable time schedule.

In summary, this activity could be developed in 3 steps:
- step 1: preparation of the seminar for managers (dates, detailed programming, invitations, logistics), June / August 2015;
- step 2: organizing the seminar for managers in the production of a detailed logical framework of the action plan for the 2016 financial year and for the next 3 years, first fortnight in September 2015;
- step 3: adoption by the next General Assembly, in September 2015.

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Table 4 – Tentative schedule Actions 3 and 4 (Year 2016).

7-3-4 Design a business plan

It is about getting a complementary management tool for the Action Plan, designed to clarify and facilitate the functioning of the network, in particular to define or clarify the fundamental part of its response:
- its place alongside other stakeholders (field of expertise, comparative advantages, ...);
- its partnership option for formal agreements;
- its development and balance plan (institutional, human, technical and financial);
- its communication option, particularly the networking of members and partners;
- its human resources plan (functional organization of the ME, adapting the terms of reference for positions, any adjustments, training needs ...);
- its communication option, particularly the networking of members and partners;
- its financing option (resources, flow, ...);
- ...

This work should be carried out in parallel with the development of the Action Plan:
- step 1: achievement in early autumn;
- stage 2: adoption by the next General Assembly, in September 2015.

Taken together, the two previous actions only slightly interfere on the option that will be selected and can still be tailored to the margin at the appropriate time if necessary.

However, they are important in the short and medium term for the future of the network and should also be finalized in time to allow donors to undertake possible supports from 2016.

They finally meet the recommendations of the Moser Report, for the improvement of the strategic planning mechanisms of RAMPAO.
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- **Gambie** : art. 25 (1-e) de la Constitution (1997) ;
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