



"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"
**7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999**

**Technical Session III:
Involving people at all levels in the conservation and wise use of wetlands
Paper 2**

**Promoting participatory wetland and river basin management
through education and understanding¹**

Background

1. This component of Technical Session III will consider the *Outreach Program 1999-2002 - Actions to promote communication, education and public awareness to support implementation of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)* which has been prepared in response to General Objective 3 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 of the Convention on Wetlands, as adopted at the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties in 1996. This General Objective, through three Operational Objectives, describes a range of actions designed to allow the Convention *"to raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels"*.
2. The three Operational Objectives under General Objective 3 of the Strategic Plan refer to:
 - An International Program of Education and Public Awareness,
 - National Programmes of Education and Public Awareness and
 - the Communications Activities of the Convention, and in particular the Bureau.
3. In the Outreach Programme annexed to proposal No. 9 (see Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.9), the same three areas are considered in an integrated way and guidance given to assist Contracting Parties, the Bureau and the Convention's International Partners in taking a strategic and structured approach to communication, education and public awareness as a mechanism for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
4. To guide the development of the Outreach Programme, the Ramsar Bureau hosted a workshop at headquarters on 24-25 September 1998. In accord with Action 3.1.4 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan, this workshop was attended by representatives of the following global, regional and national programmes involved with wetlands and water education and public awareness:

¹ See also the related document Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.9.

Commission on Communication and Education, IUCN - The World Conservation Union,
Ghana Wildlife Society;
Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN);
Water Planet;
Water Watch Asia;
Watercourse and Project WET;
Waterwatch Australia;
Wetlands International Specialist Group on Education and Public Awareness;
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust; and
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

5. At its 21st meeting the Standing Committee reviewed the draft Outreach Programme and decided to approve it “*in principle, to be further developed for the COP7 Technical Session III, and endorsed the proposal to urge Contracting Parties to establish national Education, Public Awareness, and Communications (EPAC) focal points*” (Decision SC21.6).
6. Following the meeting of the Standing Committee, the Outreach Programme was revised taking into consideration several suggested improvements to the document provided by members of the Standing Committee, and in particular members of the subgroup of the Standing Committee which reviewed a range of communication, education and public awareness matters at the 21st meeting.