



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and the “three pillars” of the Convention

The 6th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP6), held in Brisbane, Australia, in 1996, adopted an innovative Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which became a model for the planning processes of other conventions. Following on from the success of that plan, COP8, in Valencia, Spain, 2002, concluded three years of consultation and drafting by adopting the **Strategic Plan 2003-2008**, not only to continue the thrust of the first plan but also to take account of the fact that a still broader approach to wetland conservation and sustainable development was needed, notably in relation to poverty eradication and food and water security, integrated approaches to water management, climate change and its predicted impacts, increasing globalization of trade and reducing of trade barriers, the increasing role of the private sector, and the increasing influence of development banks and international development agencies.

In the second Strategic Plan, Contracting Parties seek to deliver their commitments to wetland conservation and wise use through “three pillars” of action. These are:

- a) working towards the **wise use of their wetlands** through a wide range of actions and processes contributing to human well-being (including poverty alleviation and water and food security) through sustainable wetlands, water allocation, and river basin management, including establishing national wetland policies and plans; reviewing and harmonizing the framework of laws and financial instruments affecting wetlands; undertaking inventory and assessment; integrating wetlands into the sustainable development process; ensuring public participation in wetland management and the maintenance of cultural values by local communities and indigenous people; promoting communication, education and public awareness; increasing private sector involvement; and harmonizing implementation of the Ramsar Convention with other multilateral environmental agreements;
- b) devoting particular attention to the further identification, designation and management of a coherent and comprehensive suite of sites for **the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List)** as a contribution to the establishment of a global ecological network, and to ensure the effective monitoring and management of those sites included in the List; and
- c) **cooperating internationally** in their delivery of wetland conservation and wise use, through the management of transboundary water resources and wetlands and shared wetland species, collaboration with other conventions and international organizations, sharing of information and expertise, and increasing the flow of financial resources and relevant technologies to developing countries and countries in transition.

Each of these “three pillars” is addressed by a General Objective of the Strategic Plan. Two further General Objectives provide the means to undertake effective implementation of the objectives related to the three pillars of the Convention. The five General Objectives give structure to a total of 21 Operational Objectives, covering the following subject areas:

1. Inventory and assessment
2. Policies and legislation, including impact assessment and valuation
3. Integration of wetland wise use into sustainable development
4. Restoration and rehabilitation
5. Invasive alien species
6. Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values
7. Private sector involvement
8. Incentives
9. Communication, education, and public awareness
10. Designation of Ramsar sites
11. Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar sites
12. Management of shared water resources, wetlands and wetland species
13. Collaboration with other institutions
14. Sharing of expertise and information
15. Financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands
16. Financing of the Convention
17. Institutional mechanisms of the Convention
18. Institutional capacity of Contracting Parties
19. International Organization Partners and others
20. Training
21. Membership of the Convention

The Strategic Plan 2003-2008 is available in English, French, and Spanish on the Ramsar Web site (www.ramsar.org/key_strat_plan_2003_e.htm) and can be obtained in hard copy from the Ramsar Secretariat. The Work Plans of the Convention, the Secretariat, and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel can be found at www.ramsar.org/index_key_docs.htm#strat.

A new Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2014 is presently in development stages under the supervision of the Standing Committee’s Subgroup on the Strategic Plan, and a draft text will be considered by the Parties at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Changwon, Republic of Korea, in late October – early November 2008.

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