

**Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
2nd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Groningen, the Netherlands
7-12 May 1984**

Recommendation 2.3: Action points for priority attention

RECOGNIZING the obligation of Contracting Parties to the Convention to formulate their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory;

STRESSING the importance of international cooperation for the coordination and support of wetland conservation activities,

CONVINCED of the desirability of defining requirements and establishing priorities for activities designed to implement the Convention;

TAKING NOTE of the Framework Document revised following discussion at the present Conference and annexed to this Recommendation, which has guided discussion of the action points presented hereafter;

THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

DETERMINES that the following Action Points should receive priority attention:

1. Elaboration of a system of wetland classification or typology;
2. Preparation of a standard data sheet on wetlands and of guidelines for its use in wetland inventories;
3. Development of common criteria for evaluating the importance of wetlands at local, national or international level; and, in particular, expansion of the existing Cagliari Criteria to cover also ecological factors concerning life other than waterfowl;
4. Development of a common base for recording and evaluating long-term trends in the ecology of wetlands through monitoring of physical and biological parameters, taking into account the different levels of expertise and support in the various Contracting Parties;
5. Quantification of both direct (monetary) and indirect (non-monetary) values of wetlands and formulation of criteria to enable all values to be taken fully into account in the planning of conservation projects and projects which may lead to changes in the ecological character of wetlands;
6. Development of strategies and techniques for wetland management including measures to enable the retention of natural characteristics of wetland areas before, during and after execution of modification or transformation projects; and

7. Promotion of increased international cooperation among the Contracting Parties and interested states; in particular, development of a clearing-house function for special assistance for wetland conservation projects in developing countries.

Framework for Implementing the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 1971)

A) Introduction

The fundamental purpose of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, is to conserve wetlands through international cooperation.

The present document, based on the text of the Convention, the Recommendations of the First Conference of the Contracting Parties (Cagliari, 1980) and the discussions at the present Conference, has been drawn up to facilitate the achievement of the Convention's objectives. It is proposed as a tool to guide in the development of national and international measures to further the conservation of wetlands. Its application should be flexible and adapted to the specific conditions of individual countries.

B) National Measures

One of the principal obligations of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention is to "formulate and implement their planning so as to promote ... as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory" (Art. 3.1). The Cagliari Conference recommended that, in order to achieve this "wise use", comprehensive national policies, based on a nationwide inventory of wetlands and their resources, would be necessary.

Approaches to national wetland policies under the Ramsar Convention can be grouped under five main categories:

1. scientific;
2. policy and law;
3. management;
4. education and public awareness; and
5. special measures for sites on the Ramsar List.

1) Scientific

1.1 Development of a nationwide inventory of wetlands covering all habitats listed in Article 1.1 to the Convention, and promotion of information dissemination on the importance of the sites;

1.2 Development and application of criteria for the identification, establishment, management and monitoring of wetland reserves (including marine parks);

1.3 Data collection, monitoring and research related to species dependent on wetlands, for the purpose of management and as a contribution to international actions to sustain wetland management efforts;

1.4 Review of the importance of wetlands for species conservation, review of the status of wetland species and identification of endemic, rare, or endangered species and their critical habitat areas.

2) Policy and Law

2.1 Review of impediments, particularly social, legal and fiscal, to the conservation of wetlands;

2.2 Adoption of policies, including preventive environmental policies, to ensure wetland conservation by both public and private parties;

2.3 Development of a planning system for wetland conservation based upon natural catchment areas;

2.4 Adoption of measures to ensure as far as possible the natural quality and quantity of water supplies to wetlands;

2.5 Evaluation of environmental effects before decisions are taken which would significantly transform wetlands, and involvement of ecologists in the development of plans (authorization of transformations should only take place in exceptional circumstances, and in the public interest);

2.6 Provision of measures to mitigate or exclude any adverse effects of wetland transformation, including compensation measures, if transformation of wetlands is planned;

2.7 Monitoring and follow-up of authorized operations affecting wetlands including the adoption and utilization of corrective measures where required.

3) Management

3.1 Definition and implementation of measures required to maintain the ecological character of wetlands;

3.2 Promotion of the sustainable management of wetlands to avoid over-exploitation of wetland resources, and to provide for a firm social and economic basis for wetland conservation;

3.3 Management of man-made wetlands to create habitat for waterfowl and other wetland species when establishing and modifying such wetlands, and if possible rehabilitating degraded wetlands;

3.4 Development of management plans to maintain the populations of wetland species and of recovery plans for endangered species, as well as the regular review of these plans to ensure that their objectives, priorities and actions remain appropriate;

3.5 Strict control of the introduction of exotic species to wetlands, and where appropriate eradication of introduced species.

4) Education and Public Awareness

4.1 Promotion of public education and awareness with regard to the value of wetlands;

4.2 Development of training programmes for wetland conservation managers;

4.3 Encouragement of the participation of local populations in the establishment, management and monitoring of wetland reserves.

5) List of Wetlands of International Importance

5.1 Designation of appropriate wetlands in the light of agreed criteria, national inventories and of international “shadow” lists;

5.2 Effective conservation of listed wetlands, including wardening, development of buffer zones, and other land-use control mechanisms;

5.3 Monitoring of any changes in the ecological character of listed sites, and reporting such changes to the Convention Bureau.

C) International Measures

The purpose of the Ramsar Convention is to promote wetland conservation through international cooperation. In order to achieve this cooperation, the Contracting Parties may wish to consider the following measures, grouped according to the categories of: promotion of the Ramsar Convention, data requirements, financial and technical assistance and international cooperation.

6) Promotion of the Effectiveness of the Convention

6.1 Promotion of adherence to the Convention by developing countries, where many wetlands are still in pristine condition, and where the major opportunities for wetland conservation are likely to occur in the next twenty years;

6.2 Elaboration of the criteria adopted at the Cagliari Conference for the selection of wetlands for the Ramsar List with special reference to wetland types and species habitat insufficiently represented on the List. Criteria must be developed for species other than waterfowl, for limnological and hydrological characteristics, and might also be developed to cover economic aspects of wetlands such as fisheries.

7) Data Requirements

7.1 Coordination of national data collection, research and monitoring in order to provide an up-to-date international overview of wetland issues and priorities, and cooperation in the development of international “shadow” lists and databases.

7.2 Development of international or regional databases to monitor the conservation situation of wetlands, to draw up directories of national and international bodies working on wetlands, to prepare a global hierarchical classification system of wetland types to facilitate international comparison and to elaborate a standard ‘pro-forma’ to describe wetlands, to facilitate information exchange.

8) Financial and Technical Assistance

8.1 Provision of special assistance to developing countries in the elaboration of their national wetlands policies, in conservation and management of listed wetlands and other aspects of wetland conservation including data collection, monitoring, research, public awareness, education and training,

8.2 Ensuring that conservation measures are included in development projects where bilateral or multilateral aid programmes to developing countries affect wetlands, especially through evaluation of environmental effects before any wetland transformation is carried out (payment for the necessary conservation measures must be the responsibility of those carrying out the development projects).

9) International Cooperation

9.1 Cooperation in wetland management for the purpose of 1) migratory species conservation, 2) control of harmful influences that may affect wetlands in other countries, and 3) conservation of trans-frontier wetlands, through mutual consultation and coordination of policies.

9.2 Promotion of cooperation with other global and regional conservation conventions or other mechanisms providing additional means for wetland conservation.