

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
4th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Montreux, Switzerland
27 June – 4 July 1990

Recommendation 4.13: Responsibility of multilateral development banks (MDBs) towards wetlands

[Note: For the purposes of this Recommendation the term Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) will be taken to mean the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and three regional banks - the Inter-American Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank - which combined provide over US\$ 25 billion annually to developing countries.]

RECALLING that the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties adopted Recommendation 3.4 which noted:

- “the potential of wetlands to provide the basis for sustainable development founded on the husbanding of self-renewing natural resources”; and
- “that Development Agencies can play a crucial role in enhancing the capacity of wetlands to contribute to the well-being of people”;

RECALLING FURTHER that the same Recommendation 3.4 of the Conference of Contracting Parties urged the Development Agencies, including the MDBs:

- “to formulate and adopt coherent wetland development policies directed at sustainable utilization, wise management and conservation of wetlands;
- to create special regional wetland programmes in order to ensure the integration of this policy into all their activities;
- to coordinate their programmes at the international level to ensure that their independent activities do not in combination adversely affect wetlands;
- to strengthen ecological expertise in all departments involved in development and implementation of projects affecting wetlands;
- to develop guidelines to ensure the integration of environmental aspects in all stages of the project cycle;
- to ensure that the funding of projects is preceded by an environmental impact assessment, and the implementation of the recommended measures;
- to take appropriate steps for an assessment of their policies at regular intervals; and
- to rehabilitate those wetlands which have become degraded through non-sustainable development;”

RECALLING that the same Recommendation 3.4 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties urged the Development Agencies, including the MDBs, “to use their influence with borrowing or recipient governments:

- to promote the formulation and adoption of national policies for wise use and conservation of wetlands;
- to strengthen the institutional arrangements and the ecological expertise both at the national level and among regional development authorities in the project regions, in order to implement these policies; and
- to train and educate personnel at project implementation level;”

NOTING that in spite of this Recommendation to promote conservation, there are still too many instances of MDB-financed projects leading directly or indirectly to the loss of critical wetlands, and that MDBs are not generally promoting the wise use and conservation of wetlands in developing countries;

CONSIDERING that the United States government has adopted voting standards directing the U.S. representative to the MDBs to oppose projects that have significant adverse impacts on wetlands and their important functions and services;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

CALLS ON the Contracting Parties to pursue Recommendation 3.4 in a more rigorous and systematic way;

FURTHER CALLS ON the Contracting Parties to urge MDBs and the other Development Agencies to advance conservation and wise use of wetlands through improved technical assistance, and consideration of these issues early in the planning process; and

URGES Contracting Parties to ensure that their representatives to the MDBs adopt voting standards in support of the conservation and wise use of wetlands.