

**Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**  
**5th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties**  
**Kushiro, Japan**  
**9-16 June 1993**

**Recommendation 5.9: Establishment of Ramsar guidelines on Wetlands of International Importance as fish habitat**

RECALLING that the Preamble to the Convention emphasizes the “fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes and as habitats supporting a characteristic flora and fauna” and the conviction that “wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable”;

FURTHER RECALLING the importance attached by the Convention to the wise use of renewable natural resources;

NOTING that fishes are the most abundant vertebrates associated with wetlands and may form the basis of valuable fisheries;

AND FURTHER NOTING that coastal wetlands form an important nursery for fisheries, including offshore fisheries;

RECOGNIZING that more effective identification and management of wetlands of importance as fish habitat and as a source of traditional fisheries would improve the quality of life of local people and increase the relevance of the Ramsar Convention to developing countries;

EMPHASIZING the need for much closer cooperation between the Ramsar family and the bodies concerned with the conservation and wise use of fisheries;

RECALLING that Recommendation REC. C.4.2 of the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, held at Montreux, Switzerland in 1990, adopted “Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance”;

FURTHER RECALLING that Section 2 of these Criteria, entitled “General criteria based on plants or animals”, recognizes that animals other than waterfowl may be used as a criterion for identifying wetlands of international importance;

TAKING NOTE of the presentations in Workshop D of the present meeting by The Netherlands and South Africa on the role of wetlands in fish ecology;

**THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES**

RECOMMENDS that criteria and guidelines be developed on the importance of wetlands for fishes, both as regards biodiversity and fishery yields, and taking into account the wise use principle so that fisheries shall have no negative impact on the wetlands;

INSTRUCTS the Convention Bureau, in cooperation with appropriate experts from the Contracting Parties, partner organizations and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, to formulate proposals on criteria to be used when identifying wetlands of international importance as

fish habitat or as a nursery for fisheries, including offshore fisheries, and to develop guidelines for the application of such criteria; and

FURTHER INSTRUCTS the Bureau to present the results of this work to the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.