

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Proceedings of the 6TH Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Brisbane, Australia, 19-27 March 1996)

RECOMMENDATION 6.3: INVOLVING LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE MANAGEMENT¹ OF RAMSAR WETLANDS

1. RECALLING the “Guidelines for the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept” (Annex to Recommendation 4.10) which call for the development of management plans for Ramsar sites which involve local people and take account of their requirements;
2. FURTHER RECALLING the “Additional Guidance for the Implementation of the Wise Use Concept” (Annex to Resolution 5.6) which suggests that Contracting Parties establish procedures which guarantee that local communities are involved in the decision-making process related to wetland use, and provide local communities with sufficient knowledge of planned activities to assure their meaningful participation in the decision-making process;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING that local and indigenous people have a particular interest in ensuring that the wetlands within their region are managed wisely and, in particular, that indigenous people have distinct knowledge, experience and aspirations in relation to wetland management;
4. BELIEVING that wise use of wetlands will benefit the quality of life of local and indigenous people and that these people, in addition to their involvement in site management, should derive the benefits that result from conservation and wise and sustainable use of wetlands;
5. NOTING that in some cases local and indigenous people are excluded from the decision-making process by virtue of a lack of appropriate consultative mechanisms or lack of understanding of the issues involved;
6. AWARE that many local and indigenous people, have long associations with the wetlands in their region and can assist with developing management techniques for modern times based on traditional management practices;
7. NOTING that the Technical Session on community-based wetland management held during the present meeting of the Conference disclosed several promising non-government organization models for active and informed participation of local people in the wise use of their wetland resources, such as those initiated by the Caddo Lake Institute in the United States, the IUCN Regional Offices in Senegal and Costa Rica, the Kushiro International Wetlands Centre in Japan, the World Wide Fund for Nature in India (Keoladeo National Park) and in Pakistan (Uchchali), and the Ecological Station of Mamirauá (Brazil); and

¹ For the purposes of this recommendation “management” encompasses conservation and wise use.

8. ALSO NOTING that the dissemination of information regarding these and other successful models will both benefit the Contracting Parties and promote the implementation of the Strategic Plan's Operational Objective 2.7 by encouraging community-level non-government partnerships;

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9. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to make specific efforts to encourage active and informed participation of local and indigenous people, at Ramsar listed sites and other wetlands and their catchments, and their direct involvement, through appropriate mechanisms, in wetland management;
10. DIRECTS the Convention Bureau to intensify its efforts to promote through Contracting Parties, on a global scale, the importance of the involvement of local and indigenous people in the management of wetlands, and to seek special sponsorship support to do so;
11. FURTHER CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to recognize the value of the knowledge and skills of local and indigenous people, in relation to wetland management, and to make special efforts to encourage and facilitate from the outset their participation in the development and implementation of wetland policies and programmes;
12. URGES Contracting Parties to consider representation of local and indigenous people on National Ramsar Committees, and, where possible and appropriate, in the national delegations to future meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
13. INSTRUCES the Bureau, in consultation with the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF), the Kushiro International Wetlands Centre, the Caddo Lake Institute, IUCN - The World Conservation Union, and Contracting Parties, and other NGOs having relevant regional and local experience, to produce an evaluation of the benefits derived by local and indigenous people from conservation and wise use along with criteria and guidance for involving local and indigenous people in the management of wetlands for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
14. FURTHER DIRECTS the Convention Bureau to disseminate by all appropriate means, case studies and other information, demonstrating active and informed participation of local and indigenous people in the management of wetlands; and
15. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties to develop appropriate national and local mechanisms, drawing from any existing models, to ensure consultation with local and indigenous people with a view to reflecting their needs and values, traditional and other knowledge and practices in national wetland policies and programmes, and in management planning for Ramsar sites and other significant wetlands.