

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 6.7: CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF CORAL REEFS AND ASSOCIATED ECOSYSTEMS

1. AWARE of the degradation of many of the world's coral reefs and associated ecosystems, including mangrove forests and seagrass beds;
2. CONSCIOUS of the need to recognize fully the benefits to humankind of coral reefs and associated ecosystems through food production, tourism, recreation, aesthetics, and shoreline protection;
3. ACKNOWLEDGING the socio-economic, ecological, cultural, and recreational importance of coral reefs and associated ecosystems for Small Island Developing States and other countries;
4. CONSIDERING that coral reefs and associated ecosystems are important wetland types hitherto under-represented in the work of the Convention;
5. NOTING Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, which identifies coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds as marine ecosystems of high biological diversity and production, and recommends that they be accorded high priority for identification and protection;
6. WELCOMING the International Coral Reef Initiative, which is a partnership of governments and international and national non-governmental organizations with the goal of promoting sustainable management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems through more effective research, monitoring, and management, and related capacity-building;
7. RECALLING the definition of wetlands under Article 1.1 of the Ramsar Convention, which includes "areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres"; and Article 2.1 of the Convention, which requires each Contracting Party to designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance; and
8. NOTING the criteria for representative or unique wetlands and the general criteria based on plants or animals set forth in the "Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance", Annex 1 to Recommendation 4.2; and Annex 2B to Recommendation 4.7, which specifically identifies coral reefs in the list of Marine and Coastal Wetlands Types;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. URGES Contracting Parties to designate suitable areas of their coral reefs and associated ecosystems for inclusion as Ramsar sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;

10. RECOMMENDS that the Convention Bureau foster conservation and wise use of coral reefs and associated ecosystems as a component of an integrated strategy of world-wide wetland conservation;
11. REQUESTS the Convention Bureau to demonstrate the benefits of becoming Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention to States in regions until now under-represented in the Convention, especially in Oceania and the Caribbean;
12. URGES the Convention Bureau to support the International Coral Reef Initiative's Call to Action and Framework for Action in Ramsar activities whenever appropriate, by undertaking research and monitoring as outlined in the Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 that will contribute to the sustainable use and conservation of coral reefs and associated ecosystems; and
13. URGES the Bureau and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to liaise with the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Seas Programme and UNEP's Programme Element 1.1: Caring for Freshwater, Coastal and Marine Resources.