

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 6.18: CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS
IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION**

1. NOTING the Port Moresby Statement arising from the first Workshop on conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific Islands region, held in June 1994;
2. FURTHER NOTING that this workshop has led to the development of a Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands;
3. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the sensitive issues of customary ownership of land and resources for implementation of any wetland conservation initiatives, including management of Ramsar sites in the Pacific Islands region;
4. ALSO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States and its promotion of cross-sectoral, holistic management of island resources, including wetland resources;
5. WELCOMING the initiatives of the Australian Government in its support for wetland conservation in the Pacific Islands region and its pledge of future support, and the contributions of other governments, donor agencies and international organizations in this regard;
6. NOTING that the Ramsar Convention includes coral reefs in its definition, that coral reefs are particularly diverse and extensive in the Pacific Islands region, that the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) will assist in enhancing conservation of reefs and related ecosystems, but that few coral reefs have been included in the Ramsar List so far;
7. RECOGNIZING the limited number of skilled persons and low financial resources available to national conservation agencies in the Pacific Islands region;
8. DETERMINED to enhance the traditional knowledge of wise use of wetland resources and to increase the understanding of best practice within communities; and
9. AWARE that the growing populations of Pacific Island countries and the need for national development are placing great pressure on the small land areas with limited resources, thereby threatening wetland sites and species within national boundaries;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. URGES Contracting Parties and international organizations to continue to increase their technical and financial assistance to Pacific Island countries with respect to conservation and wise use of wetlands, consistent with national priorities for environmentally sustainable development;

11. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties and international organizations to support the development of local, national and regional capabilities in regard to wetland assessment, monitoring, management, planning and awareness;
12. DIRECTS the Bureau to allocate time and resources to ensuring that the benefits of Ramsar accession to Pacific Island countries, and wise use principles, are made transparent;
13. FURTHER DIRECTS the Bureau to liaise closely with, and support as appropriate, the existing regional initiatives being undertaken by the Pacific regional and national organizations where these relate to wetlands, including the draft Regional Wetlands Action Plan and the ICRI Pacific Regional Strategy;
14. CALLS ON the Contracting Parties, the Bureau and Ramsar Partners to recognize the critical importance of community consultation as a necessary process in the development of any wetland conservation initiatives in the Pacific Islands region; and
15. ALSO DIRECTS the Bureau, in consultation with Contracting Parties and Ramsar Partners, to communicate with global and regional environment conventions and agencies of relevance to small island nations, to ensure that opportunities for cooperation are maximized.