

## Recommendation 7.2



*"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"*  
7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),  
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999

### Small Island Developing States, island wetland ecosystems, and the Ramsar Convention

1. RECALLING Recommendation 6.18 relating to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific Islands region, and in particular its reference to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;
2. NOTING General Objective 1 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which states that *"a special effort will be made to encourage Small Island Developing States to join [the Convention] in recognition of their special needs and significant wetlands, including coral reefs, sea-grass beds and mangroves?"*;
3. CONSCIOUS of the close dependence of people in small island states on wetlands due to the small size of the concerned areas, the vulnerable character of island ecosystems, and, because of their geographic isolation, the high level of endemism in these countries;
4. CONGRATULATING the Ramsar Bureau, which with assistance from Wetlands International - Oceania, prepared and distributed a leaflet for the Small Island Developing States on the relevance and benefits of the Ramsar Convention to the special circumstances which prevail in these countries;
5. AWARE that despite the efforts to encourage accession, and the continuing threats to their coastal and freshwater wetlands, relatively few of the world's Small Island Developing States have joined the Ramsar Convention;
6. AWARE ALSO of the resource constraints, both human and financial, within which the Small Island Developing States must operate in implementing environmental conventions and the desirability of harmonising and streamlining this implementation where appropriate;
7. RECOGNIZING the recommendations contained in the report prepared by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, *"Feasibility study for a harmonised information management infrastructure for the biodiversity-related conventions"*, and in particular the recommendations relating to streamlining of national reporting procedures (Resolution VII.4);
8. ACKNOWLEDGING the support and assistance provided to the Small Island Developing States by bilateral and multilateral donors for integrated environmental management, and the important role which regional organizations such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in the Oceania region and the Indian Ocean Commission play in facilitating these activities;

9. NOTING WITH APPROVAL the partnership between the Ramsar Administrative Authority of Australia and Wetlands International under which technical and training support is provided to the Small Island Developing States of Oceania for implementing the wise use of wetlands principles of the Convention;
10. CONSCIOUS OF and APPLAUDING the Wetlands for the Future programme supported by the United States of America and administered by the Ramsar Bureau, which provides support for training initiatives for the Contracting Parties of the Neotropics, including the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean;
11. FURTHER RECALLING that under the Joint Work Plan between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention (Resolution VII.4), priority is to be given to assisting the Small Island Developing States with integrated approaches to implementation of the two Conventions;
12. CONGRATULATING the Government of New Zealand for hosting the first regional meeting for the Oceania Region in December 1998 and WELCOMING the recommendations from that meeting; and
13. RECALLING Recommendation 6.6 which urged Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners, and the Ramsar Bureau to seek support for the establishment and maintenance of regionally-based Ramsar liaison officers;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

14. CALLS UPON the Governments of the following Small Island Developing States to consider, as a matter of priority, accession to the Ramsar Convention in order to allow the special circumstances and needs of these States to be better addressed by the Convention in the future: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cape Verde, Dominica, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Grenada, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; together with the Cook Islands and Niue (Ramsar site nomination needed);
15. URGES all Contracting Parties with small island wetland ecosystems within their territory to give special attention to ensuring the application of the Convention for these areas in recognition of their fragility and special management needs, and, where appropriate, to consider the inclusion of those wetlands in the List of Wetlands of International Importance;
16. REQUESTS the Standing Committee to review the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States with a view to identifying a range of priority actions which the Ramsar Bureau should pursue, both independently and in partnership with other convention secretariats, regional organizations and programmes, the Convention's International Organization Partners, and donors;
17. FURTHER REQUESTS, in response to the above review of the Barbados Programme of Action by the Standing Committee, that the Ramsar Bureau, with the Convention's International Organization Partners, investigate, and develop as appropriate, Memoranda of Cooperation and joint plans of actions with the established programmes and

organizations that are facilitating integrated environment management in the Small Island Developing States;

18. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Bureau, as availability of funds and human resources allow, to continue its energetic efforts to promote harmonised implementation of the international environment conventions (Resolution VII.4) through its various Memoranda of Cooperation and Understanding and associated joint work plans, and to continue supporting the implementation of the recommendations from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre report, "*Feasibility study for a harmonised information management infrastructure for the biodiversity-related conventions*", since both of these activities will assist in addressing the resources constraints faced by the Small Island Developing States;
19. STRONGLY ENDORSES the development of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Resolution VII.4), noting the direct and urgent interests which the Small Island Developing States have in the impacts of climate change and the important roles of wetlands in addressing these threats;
20. ALSO CALLS UPON the bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies to continue their support and, as appropriate, to increase this support, for wetland-related projects in the Small Island Developing States and to give priority to pilot testing in these countries the various guidelines adopted by this Conference;
21. INVITES other Contracting Parties and donor organizations to follow the examples of Australia (paragraph 9 above) and the United States of America (paragraph 10) to develop mechanisms for providing direct technical and training support for the Small Island Developing States, including support for a small island state internship programme and a specialist position on small island issues within the Ramsar Bureau, as a permanent post; and
22. STRONGLY URGES Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners and the Ramsar Bureau to strengthen their efforts towards the establishment and maintenance of regionally-based Ramsar liaison officers, as expressed at the first Oceania regional meeting.