



Resolution VII.5

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

Critical evaluation of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and Wise Use (SGF) and its future operations

1. RECALLING Resolution 4.3 establishing the Wetland Conservation Fund (WCF), and Resolution 5.8 on future funding and operation of the WCF;
2. RECALLING ALSO Resolution VI.6 which renamed the WCF the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (Ramsar SGF), further reviewed its operation, and made a recommendation on its level of funding;
3. NOTING that Action 8.4.2 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 directed that for COP7 the performance of the SGF should undergo a critical evaluation, and that this was to be prepared by the Ramsar Bureau, reviewed by the Standing Committee at its 21st meeting in 1998, and transmitted to this meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties;
4. NOTING WITH PLEASURE that since its inception in 1991 the SGF has provided funding for 113 small projects in 72 developing countries and countries in transition for a total amount of SFR 3,815,821;
5. EXPRESSING ITS SINCERE APPRECIATION to those Contracting Parties and organizations that have made voluntary contributions to complement the core budget allocation to the SGF;
6. NOTING WITH CONCERN that the level of funding at the disposal of the SGF has not been sufficient to fund another 122 valuable projects that were submitted by eligible Contracting Parties, and that a renewed effort is required to attract greater financial support with longer term guarantees for the Fund;
7. COMMENDING the Ramsar Bureau for its various initiatives to improve the assessment processes, administration and monitoring of projects supported by the SGF, as well as for its fundraising efforts for the Fund; and
8. CONCERNED that some recipients of SGF funds have failed to meet their obligations in terms of reporting on progress and final project outcomes, at all, or in a timely manner;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

9. EXPRESSES its conviction that the critical review submitted to Ramsar COP7 of the first nine years of operation of the Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetlands Conservation and

Wise Use (Ramsar SGF) demonstrates that this mechanism continues to be extremely valuable for facilitating the implementation of the Convention in developing countries and countries in transition;

10. REITERATES its conviction expressed in Resolutions 5.8 and VI.6 that the level of resources available to the Ramsar SGF should be increased to at least US\$ 1 million annually;
11. URGES that a mechanism be developed for receiving commitments of contributions to the SGF, if possible for a three-year period at a time, and REQUESTS the Contracting Parties that will chair the Standing Committee and the Subgroup on Finance of the Standing Committee in the next triennium to seek to initiate this mechanism, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau and the Standing Committee as a whole;
12. DIRECTS that in future years the Ramsar Bureau offer, as availability of funds and human resources allow, an advisory service to those countries wishing to seek advice and assistance with project preparations, and that, in order to do this, proponents be invited to submit draft project proposals to the Bureau by 31 January each year so that advice can be provided prior to the formal submission of projects by 31 March;
13. DECIDES that in future years the Standing Committee should make funding for new projects conditional upon satisfactory compliance with reporting requirements for previous grants to the same country under the Fund;
14. ALSO DECIDES that in order to improve project monitoring and evaluation, in future years the following modifications to the *modus operandi* of the SGF should apply:
 - a. the Ramsar Bureau's annual Work Programmes should include an allocation of staff time to SGF project follow-up and evaluation, including visiting project sites and meetings with those responsible for project implementation, when travelling to countries which have received SGF funding;
 - b. the Administrative Authorities within recipient countries should be encouraged to monitor progress and evaluate final reports under the SGF using the Project Evaluation Form; and
 - c. further to b. above, as appropriate, the Administrative Authorities should consider involving the National Focal Point for the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) (Resolution VII.2) in SGF project monitoring and evaluation;
15. FURTHER DIRECTS the Ramsar Bureau to increase its efforts, as availability of funds and human resources allow, to provide more detailed and more regular feedback to donors, relying mostly on the project evaluations as they are submitted; to establish a dedicated area on the Convention's Web site for SGF matters; and to use this area to display project summaries and other promotional materials as they are received; and
16. AUTHORIZES the Standing Committee to continue to evaluate the functioning of the Fund as prescribed in Resolution VI.6, including the mechanisms for deciding on grant allocations and for project monitoring and evaluation, and to implement any changes in functioning which it considers necessary; and REQUESTS the Standing Committee to

report on the results of this evaluation to Ramsar COP8. This evaluation should take into account the possibility that the management of the SGF could be entrusted to by one of the Convention's International Organization Partners.