



“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**

**The Ramsar Convention and impact assessment:
strategic, environmental and social**

1. RECALLING Article 3.2 of the Convention which states that each Contracting Party *“shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List [of Wetlands of International Importance] has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference”*, and also Article 3.1 which states that Contracting Parties *“shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory”*;
2. FURTHER RECALLING Recommendation 6.2 which *“calls on the Contracting Parties to integrate environmental considerations in relation to wetlands into planning decisions in a clear and publicly transparent way”*;
3. AWARE that Action 2.5.1 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 sets out to *“expand the Additional Guidance on Wise Use by preparing, for a technical session at the 7th COP, the results of a review of environmental appraisal guidelines and examples of current best practice ELA”*;
4. ALSO AWARE that Action 2.5.4 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 urges Contracting Parties to *“take account of Integrated Environmental Management and Strategic Environmental Assessment (at local, provincial and catchment/ river basin or coastal zone levels) when assessing impacts of development proposals or changes in land/ water use”*;
5. RECOGNIZING Operational Objective 2.4 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which urges Contracting Parties *“to provide economic evaluations of the benefits and functions of wetlands for environmental planning processes”* and Recommendation 6.10 which notes *“that it is vital that all wetland economic values be identified, measured and reported upon to increase national and international awareness of the need for and benefits of wetland conservation”*;
6. REAFFIRMING the role of impact assessment and economic valuation as key tools for assisting the Contracting Parties in their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Convention, especially with respect to the management of sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List) and in the implementation of the wise use principle;
7. NOTING WITH APPROVAL that the issues of impact assessment and economic valuation form elements of the Joint Work Plan between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (Resolution VII.4) and that this was endorsed by Decision IV/15 of CBD’s 4th Conference of the Parties;

8. ALSO NOTING WITH APPROVAL that CBD's Decision IV/10c on impact assessment and minimizing adverse effects specifically encouraged collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), and IUCN-The World Conservation Union on this matter; and
9. HAVING CONSIDERED the paper on *The Ramsar Convention and impact assessment* presented to Technical Session IV of this Conference, and in particular its advice regarding integrated approaches to impact assessment at the policy, plan, programme and project levels;

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10. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to reinforce and strengthen their efforts to ensure that any projects, plans, programmes and policies with the potential to alter the ecological character of wetlands in the Ramsar List, or impact negatively on other wetlands within their territories, are subjected to rigorous impact assessment procedures and to formalise such procedures under policy, legal, institutional and organizational arrangements;
11. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to ensure that impact assessment procedures seek to identify the true values of wetland ecosystems in terms of the many functions, values and benefits they provide, to allow these environmental, economic and broader social values to be included in decision-making and management processes;
12. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to ensure that impact assessment processes relating to wetlands are undertaken in a transparent and participatory manner which includes local stakeholders, as encouraged through the *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands* (Resolution VII.8);
13. ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, as part of their ongoing monitoring and impact assessment practices for sites in the Ramsar List, to apply the *Framework for designing a wetland monitoring programme* (Resolution VI.1) and the *Wetland Risk Assessment Framework* (Resolution VII.10);
14. ALSO CALLS UPON Contracting Parties with shared wetlands and river basins to seek cooperative approaches to impact assessment with neighbouring countries as encouraged by the *Guidelines for the integration of wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management* (Resolution VII.18) and the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* (Resolution VII.19);
15. REQUESTS the Bureau to continue to work with the Secretariats of the CBD and the CMS as well as with OECD, IAIA, IUCN, and other relevant partners in exploring the use of impact assessments as tools for developing and implementing incentive measures for conserving and wisely using wetland ecosystems; and
16. FURTHER REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and the Ramsar Bureau to work in cooperation with their counterparts from the CBD and other relevant conventions and expert organizations, to review existing guidelines and available

information on environmental impact assessment and economic valuation of wetlands, in accordance with the high priority given during the last triennium (Recommendations 6.2 and 6.10). This could be reported as an Internet-based resource kit that examines the use of environmental impact assessment and economic valuation as tools for identifying opportunities to apply the wise use principle.