



*“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**

**Restoration as an element of national planning for wetland  
conservation and wise use**

1. RECALLING Recommendation 4.1 which urged Contracting Parties and the Standing Committee to take a range of actions to promote the restoration of wetlands;
2. RECALLING ALSO Recommendation 6.15 which called on Contracting Parties to *“integrate wetland restoration into their national nature conservation, land and water management policies”*;
3. NOTING Operational Objective 2.6 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 which, in particular, urges Contracting Parties to identify wetlands in need of restoration and rehabilitation, provide and implement methodologies for this purpose, and establish restoration/rehabilitation programmes, especially in association with major river systems or areas of high nature conservation value;
4. EXPRESSING GRATITUDE to the authors of the paper presented and considered by Technical Session II of this Conference entitled *Restoration as an element of national planning for wetland conservation and wise use*;
5. REITERATING the view expressed in Recommendation 4.1, and further emphasised by the above-mentioned paper, that although restoration or creation of wetlands cannot replace the loss or degradation of natural wetlands, a national programme of wetland restoration, pursued in parallel with wetland protection, can provide significant additional benefits for both people and wildlife, when the restoration is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable;
6. NOTING WITH APPROVAL that in the National Reports submitted for this Conference, 76 Contracting Parties advised that wetland restoration activities are occurring in their countries, but EXPRESSING CONCERN that the level of this activity in most Contracting Parties is not high and that few Parties indicated that the promotion of restoration is part of their National Wetland Policies and related policy instruments;
7. RECOGNISING that capacity building and additional human and financial resources may be required in order to foster the development of restoration and rehabilitation initiatives, but also AWARE that in many countries it is local people/stakeholders who are taking the lead with such initiatives, in recognition of the vital functions, services and benefits wetlands provide;

8. CONSCIOUS that in Technical Session I of this Conference on Ramsar and Water, restoration of wetlands was identified as a priority in the papers presenting guidelines for integrating wetlands conservation and wise use into river basin management, on wetlands as elements of water policy formulation, and on defining Ramsar's role in response to the global water crisis; and
9. REALIZING that through a number of Resolutions, this Conference has adopted guidance for the Contracting Parties on wetland policy formulation (Resolution VII.6), reviewing laws and institutions (Resolution VII.7), involving local communities and indigenous people in wetland management (Resolution VII.8), promoting communication, education and awareness related to wetlands and waterways (Resolution VII.9), integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management (Resolution VII.18), and priorities for wetland inventory (Resolution VII.20), all of which assist with the promotion of wetland restoration in appropriate ways;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. CALLS UPON all Contracting Parties to recognise that although restoration or creation of wetlands cannot replace the loss of natural wetlands, and that avoiding such loss must be a first priority, a national programme of wetland restoration, pursued in parallel with wetland protection, can provide significant additional benefits for both people and wildlife, when the restoration is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable;
11. URGES Contracting Parties to produce information about wetland losses, including an assessment of the lost processes, functions, composition and values of wetland areas. This information should include data about the restoration potential of these sites and the full benefits of restoration, including identification, at all appropriate levels and using standardised protocols for data gathering and handling as requested in Resolution VII.20, of sites that are a priority for restoring for the benefit of people and the natural environment;
12. ALSO CALLS UPON all Contracting Parties, in the context of approaches which seek to avoid loss of wetlands and of the Joint Work Plan between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, to review, and as necessary amend, their approaches to promoting wetland restoration. In doing so, particular priority should be given to promoting sustainable restoration as part of policy frameworks which promote an ecosystem approach, communication, education and capacity building programmes and support for local stakeholder actions, taking account of traditional norms and the specific role of women;
13. FURTHER URGES Contracting Parties when reviewing their approaches to restoration to examine in detail and address the areas of legislation (Resolution VII.7), incentives for wetland conservation (Resolution VII.15), impact assessment (Resolution VII.16) and transboundary action at the catchment level (Resolution VII.19);
14. URGES Contracting Parties to implement and evaluate projects and programmes as a means of promoting ecologically, economically and socially sustainable restoration of degraded sites, giving full consideration to the elements identified in Annex 1 to this Resolution;

15. REQUESTS Contracting Parties to identify constraints in and solutions for implementing ecologically, economically and socially sustainable wetland restoration, and based on this to develop demonstration projects and targeted technical exchange programmes, reporting on this in their National Reports to Ramsar COP8; and
16. REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau, in consultation with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, to identify sources of expertise on specific aspects of wetland restoration and rehabilitation (drawing on established networks such as IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management, DIVERSITAS, Wetlands International's Wetland Restoration Specialist Group and others), to further develop tools and guidelines, and make this available to the Contracting Parties.

## Annex

### Wetland restoration and rehabilitation

#### Elements to consider in restoration and rehabilitation programmes and projects

1. National planning and legislation on protection and sustainable use of nature, environment and water management should be developed to include obligations or, at least, options for wetland restoration. This may also promote the allocation of funds for restoration purposes. It should define restoration objectives and priorities at strategic level, with reference to lost wetland functions, processes and components.
2. Programmes contributing to the fulfilling of international obligations relating to conservation and sustainable use of wetlands should have priority.
3. Multiple purposes such as conservation of biodiversity, provision of reliable food resources, fresh water supply, purification, flood control and recreation may often increase the sustainability and total benefits of a restoration project.
4. Identify and involve all stakeholders at an early stage. The realisation of a project is dependent on cooperation between landowners and/or land-users, public authorities and politicians at different levels, scientific advisory bodies and non-governmental organizations.
5. Monitoring and evaluation of the effects and dissemination of information on the results is needed. Feedback to programme or project operation should be assured, and adjustments made if necessary to achieve the defined targets.
6. Strategic environmental impact assessment and cost benefit analysis are recommended before programme or project approval and implementation.
7. Successfully implemented pilot projects can provide much inspiration and stimuli for the development of forthcoming restoration projects and programmes.
8. General and popular information about effects and consequences before, during and after the implementation of programmes and projects is important.
9. Some important questions to evaluate in advance of projects, in relation to their usefulness and feasibility, include:
  - 9.1 Will there be environmental benefits, e.g. improved water supplies and water quality (reduced eutrophication, preservation of freshwater resources, biodiversity conservation, improved management of “wet resources”, flood control)?
  - 9.2 What is the cost effectiveness of the project? The investments and changes should in the longer term be sustainable, not only yielding temporary results. Aim for low costs in the construction phase; and aim for low or nil running costs for future maintenance. When establishing the cost effectiveness of the restoration projects, take into account all possible added benefits from restoring the sites.

- 9.3 What options, advantages or disadvantages will the restored area provide for local people and for the region? These may include health conditions, essential food and water resources, increased possibilities for recreation and ecotourism, improved scenic values, educational opportunities, conservation of historical or religious sites, etc.
- 9.4 What is the ecological potential of the project? What is the present status of the area in terms of habitats and biological values? How is the area expected to develop with respect to hydrology, geomorphology, water quality, plant and animal communities, etc?
- 9.5 What is the status of the area in terms of present land use? The situation will differ widely between developing countries, countries with economies in transition, and developed countries and with respect to the objectives of restoration and rehabilitation. In particular, marginal lands yielding few benefits in the present situation can often be improved.
- 9.6 What are the main socio-economic constraints? Is there a positive regional and local interest in realising the project?
- 9.7 What are the main technical constraints?