



"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**

Collaborative structure for Mediterranean wetlands

1. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT eight years of collaborative efforts in favour of Mediterranean wetlands, within the framework of the Convention on Wetlands, and more specifically:
 - a) the launching in 1991 of a concerted effort for the conservation and wise use of Mediterranean wetlands under the name 'Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative' (MedWet) as a joint effort of the Ramsar Bureau, the European Commission (EC), the Italian Government, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (now Wetlands International), the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat (France), and the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF);
 - b) the implementation of the MedWet1 project (1993-1996), funded to a large extent by the EC and encompassing France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, during which methods and tools for wetland inventory and monitoring, management, application of research results, and public awareness were developed and tested;
 - c) the implementation of the MedWet2 project (1996-1998), carried out in Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Morocco and Tunisia, funded also to a large extent by the EC and managed by the Ramsar Bureau, during which the MedWet approach was adapted to countries of the East and South of the region, and a new socio-economic approach to wetlands conservation and sustainable use was developed;
 - d) the adoption of Recommendations 5.14 at Ramsar COP5 (Kushiro, 1993) and 6.11 at Ramsar COP6 (Brisbane, 1996) on the MedWet Initiative;
 - e) the adoption of the Declaration of Venice and the endorsement of the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy by the Conference on Mediterranean Wetlands, organized by the Italian Government and the Ramsar Bureau in June 1996, within the framework of the MedWet1 project;
 - f) Decision 19.19 of the Standing Committee of the Convention in October 1996 to establish the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) within the framework of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative, consisting at present of 25 governments of the Mediterranean basin, the Palestinian Authority, the European Commission, the Barcelona and Bern Conventions, and six wetland centres and international NGOs;

- g) the results of the first two meetings of the MedWet/Com held in Thessaloniki, Greece (March 1998) and Valencia, Spain (January 1999), hosted and financed by the Governments of these two countries;
- h) the appointment in 1996 by the Secretary General of the Convention of a MedWet Coordinator and the establishment of a secretariat structure, with the financial support of the Governments of France and Greece (and since 1999, of the Government of Spain), as well as of the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat (France) and WWF International; and
- i) the launching of two further MedWet projects concerning ten Mediterranean countries, of which one is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF);

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2. EXPRESSES ITS SATISFACTION at the work carried out so far under the Mediterranean Wetland Initiative and ITS APPRECIATION to the governments and institutions, in particular the European Commission, that have provided financial support to the Initiative; and RECOGNISES it as a model of regional collaboration, based on endogenous efforts and a wide participation of all sectors;
3. APPROVES the establishment of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com) within the framework of the Convention, as a forum for collaboration on wetland issues in the Mediterranean and as an advisor to the Convention in this region;
4. ENDORSES the Mediterranean Wetland Strategy and the Venice Declaration, which implement the Ramsar Strategic Plan in the region, as the guiding documents for efforts in the Mediterranean;
5. ENTRUSTS the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee with the task of monitoring the implementation of this Strategy and Declaration, and of adapting them to changing conditions;
6. ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties around the Mediterranean to use and further develop the methodological tools elaborated under the MedWet1 and MedWet2 projects, with a view to encouraging integrated and sustainable management of wetlands in the region;
7. INVITES Contracting Parties in other regions, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau, to consider using relevant MedWet tools, in particular, as requested in Resolution VII.20, the methodology and database for collecting, managing and storing inventory data on wetlands; and URGES countries and organizations involved in the MedWet Initiative to provide technical and financial assistance to other countries for this purpose;
8. ENDORSES the actions taken by the Secretary General of the Convention to establish and supervise a MedWet Team, consisting of a Coordinator and secretarial units, supported financially by voluntary contributions of governments and organizations in the region and elsewhere;

9. URGES Contracting Parties and institutions, in particular the European Commission, to continue providing financial support to the MedWet Initiative, in particular for its work in the developing countries and entities of the Mediterranean region; and
10. ENDORSES the initiative for the establishment of a North African Wetland Centre, and URGES Contracting Parties and institutions to contribute financial support for it.