



“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**

Compensation for lost wetland habitats and other functions

1. NOTING that the total area of natural wetlands in many countries is still declining;
2. CONCERNED that a further loss of wetland habitats could adversely affect biodiversity and other functions such as water quality, flood control and other benefits on the national or international scale;
3. RECALLING Article 3.1 of the Convention, which urges Contracting Parties to *“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”*;
4. ALSO RECALLING the Kushiro Statement (Resolution 5.1) on the *Framework for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention* which includes the commitment of the Contracting Parties to restore degraded wetlands and to compensate for wetland losses;
5. NOTING that effective wetland protection involves the conservation of wetlands as a first choice within a three-step mitigation sequence, including avoidance, minimization, and compensation, the latter only as a last resort;
6. RECALLING Recommendation 6.2 which calls upon Contracting Parties to integrate an environmental impact assessment into planning decisions in order to determine if a proposed plan or project is compatible with the wise use concept as defined in Recommendation 3.3 and in the *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept* (Recommendation 4.10 and Resolution 5.6);
7. NOTING that Member States of the European Union, according to the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of May 1992), shall take all compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected when for imperative reasons of overriding public interest and in the absence of alternatives, a plan or project must be carried out in spite of a negative assessment;
8. NOTING that the United States of America, according to the provisions of its Clean Water Act and a stated policy of no overall net loss of wetland functions and values, shall take all practicable measures to compensate for unavoidable wetland loss; and
9. RECALLING Recommendation 6.15 on restoration of wetlands, which could play a prominent role to compensate for loss of natural wetlands;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

10. URGES the Contracting Parties to take all practicable measures for compensating any loss of wetland functions, attributes and values, both in quality and surface area, caused by human activities;
11. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to integrate rules for compensation of wetland loss into their national policies on land and water planning;
12. ALSO CALLS UPON Contracting Parties to incorporate a preference for compensating for wetland loss with wetlands of a similar type and in the same local water catchment; and
13. INVITES the Standing Committee to define, in cooperation with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and the Ramsar Bureau, and in consultation with the International Organization Partners, criteria and guidelines for the compensation of wetland habitats in the case of unavoidable losses and to submit these for the approval of COP8.