



"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**

Measuring environmental quality in wetlands

1. RECOGNIZING that the capacity of the aquatic environment to support wetland ecosystems and associated ecological processes can be seriously decreased by the discharge of waste from human activities in urban, industrial and rural environments, both directly at a specific point and in cases of seepage or indirect contamination;
2. OBSERVING that a) there are important gaps in knowledge about the effect of the anthropogenic alteration of water quality on the ecological processes associated with the aquatic biotopes in wetlands; b) that these gaps in knowledge originate from a lack of unifying criteria for establishing reliable protocols and methods; and c) that this situation is also common in the study and description of indicative and significant biological, physical and chemical parameters, primarily from the point of view of their technical validity and the legal and administrative effectiveness of the procedure used for sampling water, sediments and indicator organisms;
3. NOTING that methods of sampling and analysis are often insufficiently harmonized in order to take into account the legal aspects and administrative procedures that can provide legal effectiveness in harmony with existing regulations;
4. ALSO NOTING that Recommendation 6.14 of Ramsar COP6: a) acknowledges the harmful effects that dangerous or biologically accumulative chemical substances have on wetland ecosystems when added to the water; and b) encourages the Parties to increase and harmonize study programmes in this field, making it possible to develop methods for monitoring and regulating the ecological quality of water from the point of view of biological, physical and chemical parameters; and
5. CONSCIOUS that Recommendation 6.14 requests the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to take up the question of the effect of toxic products in wetlands;

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6. REQUESTS the Contracting Parties to intensify studies on the presence and significance of toxic substances in the water, sediments and biota of wetlands;
7. AUTHORIZES the STRP, in collaboration with appropriate international bodies, to compile and disseminate reliable criteria and methods for the evaluation of the ecological quality of wetlands through the establishment of indicative biological, physical and chemical parameters;

8. REITERATES that the proper measurement and interpretation of indicative parameters of the quality of the aquatic environment in wetlands require the development and testing of universal protocols for the biological, physical and chemical sampling and analysis of water, sediments and organisms associated with these environments;
9. INVITES the Contracting Parties to promote the use of methods of sampling and analysis which have been shown, by rigorous testing, to be capable of providing results with the accuracy and precision appropriate to the quality of the intended evaluation, through the preparation, publication and distribution of recommendations in the form of clear and concise technical norms, so that qualified scientists and technicians can apply them correctly. At the same time, these norms should play an educational role in the training of specialized personnel in the study, administration and management of wetlands; and
10. URGES the Contracting Parties to keep these methods under review and encourage necessary improvements by representative organizations and institutions active in the scientific, technical, academic, administrative and legal aspects of wetland conservation. It is desirable that these reviews and improvements should involve several countries, in order to maximise the benefit and dissemination of the work.