

2003-2008 National Wetlands Strategy for Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

Under the text of Ramsar Convention (Article 1.1) wetlands are defined as; "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters".

Wetlands have values and functions that cannot be compared with other ecosystems. Besides the wildlife inventory that they host, especially waterfowl, they regulate the hydrological balance, stabilize the climate, increase water quality through the retention of sediments and toxic materials. They have significant contribution on economics both in local and national levels by means of fishing, hunting, reed cutting and touristic activities.

Wetlands in the past usually have been identified as the source of malaria and determined as unreachable and unproductive areas. Most of the wetlands on the earth have been drained due to the lack of knowledge and respect to these values and functions. In Turkey, the drainage works which have



been started in 1950s with the aim of fight against malaria, continued until mid-1990's with an objective of creating additional agricultural area.

However, it has been impossible to reach provisional agricultural productivity in most of these areas, and in some of them unexpected results have been seen, such as desertification, burning peatlands and mires. In addition, some problems occurred such as degeneration of the hydrological balance and climatic characteristics in local level, endangered and threatened species.

Following these results, NGO's, scientific institutions and governments raised against this situation, and started to develop wetland conservation programs.

Besides these, some international initiatives began to be developed, and after a series of meetings, on February 2nd, 1971 the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat" has been signed in Ramsar (Iran).

Ramsar Convention is the first international convention on nature protection. To develop an international convention on just one type of ecosystem, is the evidence of the importance which has been given by the humankind. Turkey has been party to the Ramsar Convention in 1994 through the efforts of Ministry of Environment.

Turkey has been accepted as one of the most important countries of both Europe and Middle East as regards wetlands. The two main reasons for this are; the rich and widespread wetland habitats showing different ecological characters (71 wetlands of international importance have been determined according to Ramsar's fish and waterfowl criteria. Following the evaluations which will be realized according to vegetation and other animal species this amount will be increased), and the geographical characteristics which give rise to the passage of two main migratory road of west palearctic region. After being party to the convention, 4 sites in 1994 and 5 sites in 1998 have been designated as Ramsar site in Turkey.

After being party, Turkish Government cancelled projects requiring drainage of wetlands, and after this date lots of projects having probability of negatively affecting ecological characters of wetlands have been revised.

However, because of the projects implemented in the past, there are problems in most of wetlands, even in Ramsar sites.

Some examples for them -- The storage of water resources feeding wetlands in dams, changes in water allocations or water removal from the system, degeneration of water quality because of agricultural and industrial pollution, sediment transport, invasive species, uncontrolled reed cutting.

Besides these problems, factors such as lack of management mechanisms in wetlands, insufficient coordination and collaboration between relevant institutions and absence of management plans in most of areas are preventing the success in nature protection issues.

In January 30th, 2002, the Regulation on Conservation of Wetlands has been put into force, and became a filling instrument for these gaps mentioned above. Especially "National Wetlands Committee" which has been established through this regulation became an important tool to develop coordination and collaboration between relevant institutions.

"2003-2008 National Wetlands Strategic Plan for Turkey" was prepared with the participation of delegates from all relevant governmental institutions, NGO's, and stakeholders based on Ramsar 2003-2008 Strategic Plan which has been approved in COP8, and became an important guide book for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ramsar Bureau : Ramsar Convention's Secretariat

CEPA : Communication, Education and Public Awareness

MedWet : Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative

GO : General Objective

TARGET

Provide conservation and wise use of wetlands.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

General Objective 1

To encourage the conservation of bio-diversity in wetlands and to develop research and monitoring programs through sustainable management, restoration and rehabilitation.

General Objective 2

To ensure the sustainable use of wetlands of international importance, including monitoring and management of listed sites.

General Objective 3

To promote cooperation and coordination between institutions through the active application of the Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention and in particular to mobilize additional financial and technical assistance for wetland conservation and wise use.

General Objective 4

To ensure that the relevant institutions in national level have the required implementation mechanisms and capacity to implement this strategy, to mobilize national and international resources, and to provide effective usage of these funds.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The operational objectives cover the following areas of activity:

- 1. Inventory, assesment and monitoring**
- 2. Policies and legislation, including impact assessment**
- 3. Integration of wetland wise use into sustainable development**
- 4. Restoration and rehabilitation**
- 5. Invasive alien species**
- 6. Local communities, indegenous people and cultural values**
- 7. Private sector involvement**
- 8. Communication, education and public awareness**
- 9. Designation of new Ramsar sites**
- 10. Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar sites**

11. Institutional capacity building

12. Financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands

The actions defined under the each operational objective enable to achieve one or more general objectives of this Strategic Plan.

The general objectives aimed to reach with the actions are indicated at the end of each action e.g. (GO1, 3).

INVENTORY, ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

Operational Objective 1.1:

Gather data related to all wetlands on all over the country in order to support the implementation of the convention and wise use principles.

Actions

1.1.1 Prepare national wetlands inventory by using MedWet (Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative) database system. (GO 1)

1.1.2 Make a list for the following items by using national wetlands inventory (GO 1,2)

a. Potential Ramsar Sites,

b. Wetlands having local, regional and/or national importance,

c. Karst (poljés, dolines, sinkholes, obrouks), caves, peatlands and alpine wetland ecosystems.

1.1.3 Make available a web-based national wetlands inventory for all stakeholders. (GO 1,3)

1.1.4 Publish national wetlands inventory in a report format by COP9 (9th Conference of Parties). (GO 1,3)

1.1.5 Research the impact level of climate change, ecological and natural disasters on wetlands; establish a technical working group that consists of experts from relevant institutions for this action. (GO 1)

1.1.6 Establish a "National Red List" for wild plant and animal species depending on wetlands. (GO 1)

1.1.7 Publish "History of National Wetlands" in order to reveal loss in wetlands. (GO 1)

1.1.8 Ensure that scientific data obtained in academic research centers are available in all over the country. (GO 1,3)

Operational Objective 1.2:

Investigate, monitor and evaluate the situation of wetland resources in order to ensure the implementation of wise use principle.

Actions

1.2.1 Execute studies on the determination of functions, values and biological-ecological characteristics of wetlands. (GO 1)

1.2.2 Publish and distribute the translation into Turkish of the book "Economical Valuation of Wetlands: Its History & Development (Ramsar, 1997)" (GO 1,3)

1.2.3 Investigate the methodologies about the usage of artificial wetlands in waste water treatment. (GO 1)

1.2.4 Monitor the changes in the ecological characters of the wetlands and report them to the National Wetlands Comitee for assessment. (GO 1)

1.2.5 Contribute to the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment project where available. (GO 3)

POLICIES AND LEGISLTATION, INCLUDING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Operational Objective 2.1:

Specify the most appropriate policies in order to ensure the wise use of wetlands.

Actions

2.1.1 Develop and implement a national wetlands policy using Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 2. (GO 1)

2.1.2 Ensure that wetland policies are fully integrated into development plans. (GO 1,3)

2.1.3 Harmonize the policies affecting water usage with nature protection conventions that we are party to, take into consideration wise use principles while preparing policies related with water, utilize new technologies (cleaner production, recycling, reusing, etc.) for this aim. (GO 1,3)

2.1.4 Ensure our approval for "Protocol on Pollution from Land-based Resources" of Barcelona Convention. (GO 1,3)

Operational Objective 2.2:

Make appropriate arrangements in legislations through national policies.

Actions

2.2.1 Review legislation and institutional structure including strategic environmental assessment by using Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 3, and revise if necessary. (GO 1,3,4)

2.2.2 Collaborate with IAIA (International Association of Impact Assessment) and other relevant parties - organizations for implementation of methodologies on economical, social, and environmental value and functions of wetlands (GO 3)

2.2.3 Take administrative and legislative measures for effective control on hunting in wetlands. (GO 1,3)

2.2.4 Take administrative and legislative measures for effective control on fishing in wetlands. (GO 1,3)

2.2.5 Take necessary measures in order to prevent removal of juvenile fish from wetlands. (GO 1, 3)

2.2.6 Provide the in situ prevention of pollution, which yields to destruction of wetlands, by means of administrative measures. (GO 1,3)

2.2.7 Provide the control of excessive and consciousnessless agricultural input, by administrative and legal measures. (GO 1,3)

INTEGRATION OF WETLAND WISE USE INTO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Operational Objective 3.1:

Develop and disseminate methodologies to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

3.1.1 Compile, evaluate and disseminate advice, methods and best practice studies for the wise use of wetlands. (GO 1, 3)

3.1.2 Encourage the usage of Ramsar's guidelines on wise use principles in responsible and relevant institutions' projects and financial programs. (GO 1, 3)

3.1.3 Encourage the usage of organical agricultural methodologies in agricultural areas around the wetlands. (GO 1,3)

3.1.4 Develop methodologies which will provide optimum usage of water

in all sectors dealing with water, especially in irrigation, and to encourage of usage of these methodologies. (GO 1, 3)

3.1.5 Benefit from international knowledge and experiences for conservation, wise use and management of wetlands. (GO 2,3)

Operational Objective 3.2:

Ensure the conservation and wise use of peatlands and mires.

Actions

3.2.1 Implement the Guidelines For Global Action On Peatlands adopted by COP8 (GO 1, 2, 3)

Operational Objective 3.3:

Emphasize the importance of wetlands about the topics that are water supply, coastal line stabilization, flood defense, food security, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and scientific research.

Actions

3.3.1 Promote the social and cultural heritage of wetlands by using the guidelines adopted by COP8. (GO 1, 3)

3.3.2 Promote research into the role of wetlands in water supply, coastal protection, flood defense, food security, poverty alleviation, and cultural heritage. (GO 1, 3)

Operational Objective 3.4:

Integrate policies on the conservation and wise of wetlands in the planning activities and in decision - making processes.

Actions

3.4.1 Apply the guidelines in Integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 4). (GO 1, 2, 3)

3.4.2 Apply the Guidelines for Integrating Wetlands into Integrated Coastal Zone Management adopted by COP8. (GO 1, 2, 3)

3.4.3 Apply the Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for

maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands adopted by COP8 in decision-making processes related to freshwater resources. (GO 1, 2, 3)

RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

Operational Objective 4.1

Identify wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be cost - effective and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites.

Actions

4.1.1 Compile information on new research and methodologies for the restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands and disseminate this information. (GO 1, 3)

4.1.2 Identify wetlands whose restoration or rehabilitation would be appropriate due to their present and/or former values and functions by using national scientific inventories. (GO 1)

4.1.3 Realize rehabilitation and restoration works [where available] in degraded wetlands having high priority for protection. (GO 1)

4.1.4 Apply the guidelines on wetland restoration adopted by COP8. (GO 1, 3)

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Operational Objective 5.1

Develop actions, protocols and guidelines in order to destroy, to prevent, or to control invasive species on wetlands.

Actions

5.1.1 Apply the present guidelines related to the destruction and control of invasive species. (GO 1, 2, 3)

5.1.2 Develop national action plans in order to destroy or to control invasive species. (GO 1,2,3)

LOCAL COMMUNITIES, INDIGENEOUS PEOPLE AND CULTUREL VALUES

Operational Objective 6.1

Encourage the active participation of local communities in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

6.1.1 Apply the Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in the management of wetlands (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 5). (GO 1,2,3)

6.1.2 Promote public participation in decision-making processes about wetlands. (GO 1,3)

6.1.3 Ensure the sharing of information about the designation of Ramsar sites and management of wetlands with stakeholders. (GO 1,3)

6.1.4 Ensure that local communities have priority in getting benefit from economical, social and cultural outcomes generated from the usage of wetland resources. (GO 3)

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

Operational Objective 7.1

Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

7.1.1 Encourage the private sector to apply the wise use principle (Ramsar Handbooks 1 to 6) in their activities and investments affecting wetlands. (GO 1,3)

7.1.2 Seek opportunities to involve the private sector in wetland-related decision-making processes through National Wetlands Committee. (GO 3)

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CEPA)

Operational Objective 8.1

Promote the communication, education and public awareness for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

- 8.1.1 Assist in implementing at all levels, the Convention's Outreach Programme (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 6). (GO 3)
- 8.1.2 Develop and implement a national action plan for CEPA. (GO 3)
- 8.1.3 Undertake campaigns, ideally linked to World Wetlands Day (2 February) to raise awareness of wetlands conservation and wise use issues, and seek further national recognition of World Wetlands Day. (GO 3)
- 8.1.4 Send CEPA materials to Ramsar Bureau for usage of other parties. (GO 3)
- 8.1.5 Produce materials related with conservation and wise use of wetlands to be used in scholar education programs. (GO 3)
- 8.1.6 Seek opportunities for establishment of a wetland research and education center. (GO 3,4)
- 8.1.7 Undertake campaigns at local and national levels for the protection of wetland dependent, endangered and vulnerable animal and plant species. (GO 3)
- 8.1.8 Promote mechanisms to raise public awareness on wetlands (TV programs, movies, publications). (GO 3)

DESIGNATION OF NEW RAMSAR SITES

Operational Objective 9.1

Apply the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Handbook 7)

Actions

- 9.1.1 Give priority for the designation of coastal, marine, karstic, alpine systems and peatlands as Ramsar sites. (GO 1,2)
- 9.1.2 Consistent with the Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Handbook 9), designate an area of transboundary wetland as a Ramsar site and seek opportunities for common management. (GO 1,2,3)

Operational Objective 9.2

Regularly update Ramsar Site Database as a guiding tool for further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Actions

9.2.1 Update maps and descriptions of listed sites and submit them to Ramsar Bureau. (GO 1,2,3)

MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND MONITORING OF RAMSAR SITES

Operational Objective 10.1

Maintain the ecological character and management of wetlands.

Actions

10.1.1 Ensure training of technical staff in all relevant institutions about preparation of management plans and determination of wetland protection zones. (GO 2, 3, 4)

10.1.2 Determine protection zones for wetlands, and plot the zone boundaries to all plans related to wetlands. (GO 1,2)

10.1.3 Prepare management plans for Ramsar sites and ensure their implementation. (GO 1,2,3)

10.1.4 Establish "Site Management Comitee" to support the implementation of management plans at Ramsar sites having management plan. (GO 3)

Operational Objective 10.2

Consistent with the Article 3.2 of the Convention, improve the changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites and apply Montreux Record to do so.

Actions

10.2.1 Establish a monitoring programme to identify changes in ecological character of Ramsar sites. (GO 1)

10.2.2 Consistent with the Article 3.2 of the Convention, notify the Ramsar Bureau without delay of changes negatively affecting Ramsar sites, and to provide their inclusion in Montreux Record, and to implement necessary applications about this situation. (GO 1,3)

10.2.3 Develop emergency action plans for wetlands requiring urgent intrevention. (GO 1,2,3)

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Operational Objective 11.1:

Realize capacity building studies for relevant institutions and strength cooperation between them for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

11.1.1 Increase the communication and cooperation between the institutions responsible from the conservation and management of the water resources, biodiversity and wetlands. (GO 3,4)

11.1.2 Ensure the coordination and cooperation between the national focal points of all conventions related to the nature protection. (GO 3,4)

11.1.3 Assign technical staff at sufficient number for the effective implementation of the convention. (GO 4)

11.1.4 Encourage scientific institutions to develop wetland programs and increase their capacity to a level at which they can prepare wetland management plans. (GO 2,3,4)

FINANCING THE CONSERVATION AND WISE USE OF WETLANDS

Operational Objective 12.1:

Promote national and international financial assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Actions

12.1.1 Apply national and international funds for the implementation of convention. (GO 3,4)

Prepared with the participation of;

Ministry of Environment

Ministry of Forestry

Ministry of Agriculture

Ministry of Culture

Ministry of Energy (Gen.Dir. of State Hydraulic Works)

Gen. Dir. Of National Parks
DHKD - WWF Turkey (NGO)
Bird Research Society (NGO)
Hacettepe University
Ankara University

And based on Ramsar 2003 - 2008 Wetlands Strategical Plan which was approved in Valencia in 26th November 2002 (COP8)