



9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods”

Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005

Resolution IX.21

Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands

1. AWARE that wetlands and water resources in all parts of the world have been focal points for people and societies, providing vital services and being places where local communities and indigenous peoples have developed strong cultural connections and sustainable use practices;
2. ALSO AWARE that wetlands are especially important to local communities and indigenous peoples and that these groups must have a decisive voice in matters concerning their cultural heritage;
3. FURTHER AWARE that a great number of Ramsar wetlands hold significant cultural values linked to the ecological functioning of these wetlands.
4. RECALLING that the Ramsar Convention from its beginning has recognized the cultural values of wetlands in its Preamble, as well as recognizing that cultural actions may be determined by ecological processes and *vice versa*;
5. APPRECIATING that the wise use of wetlands, the foundation of the Ramsar Convention, requires taking seriously into account these cultural values as they may assist in strengthening or re-establishing the links between people and wetlands, and giving cultural values greater recognition within the Convention;
6. NOTING Resolution VIII.19 *Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites*, adopted by COP8, and the need for its implementation;
7. TAKING ALSO INTO ACCOUNT a) Resolution VII.8 *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in the management of wetlands*, adopted by COP7, and b) paragraph 30 of Resolution VIII.10 on “additional criteria and guidelines for the identification and designation of Ramsar sites concerning socio-economic and cultural values and functions that are relevant to biological diversity ... which would be applied on each occasion in conjunction with one or more existing criteria for the identification and designation of Ramsar sites”;
8. AWARE of the work undertaken by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel during the 2003-2005 triennium concerning the inclusion of the cultural importance of wetlands in Ramsar site designation processes;

9. MINDFUL that the Ramsar Convention needs to work in cooperation with multilateral and regional agreements and other international bodies, within their respective mandates, addressing cultural heritage issues as they relate to wetlands, and NOTING the role of the World Heritage Convention in the protection of cultural heritage; and
10. NOTING the presentations and discussions during the COP9 Technical Session 2 on 'Culture and knowledge in wetland management';

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

11. ENCOURAGES the Contracting Parties to identify and analyze further case studies of wetlands with significant cultural values and make them widely known, thus increasing the knowledge and understanding of the relationship between cultural processes and wetland conservation and wise use;
12. AGREES that in the application of the existing criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, a wetland may also be considered of international importance when, in addition to relevant ecological values, it holds examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning;
13. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to incorporate cultural values in wetland policies and strategies, as well as in wetland management plans, and to communicate the results, thus contributing to the development of comprehensive and integrated approaches;
14. EMPHASIZES that measures taken with respect to this Resolution in accordance with the Ramsar Convention are consistent with Parties' rights and obligations under other international agreements;
15. IDENTIFIES the following cultural characteristics as relevant in the designation of Ramsar sites:
 - i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland;
 - ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland;
 - iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples;
 - iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland;
16. INSTRUCTS the Ramsar Secretariat to complete, through a broad participatory process, the work prescribed in paragraph 17 of Resolution VIII.19 concerning the guidance to be provided on cultural values;

17. REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to establish a multi-disciplinary working group on the cultural values of wetlands, with a balanced geographic representation, under the supervision of Standing Committee, with appropriate input from the STRP, to coordinate the activities described above; and
18. FURTHER REQUESTS the Ramsar Secretariat to analyse the activities carried out to incorporate cultural values in the work of the Convention during the triennium 2006-2008 and the experience gained, and to report to the Standing Committee and to the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10).