

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Proceedings of the 6TH Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Brisbane, Australia, 19-27 March 1996)

RESOLUTION VI.3: REVIEW OF THE RAMSAR CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE AND THE ACCOMPANYING GUIDELINES

1. RECALLING that Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention “designate suitable wetlands within their territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance” (Article 2.1 of the Convention), and that the 4th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (Montreux, Switzerland, 1990), adopted Recommendation 4.2 on “Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance”, in order to provide guidance on the identification of sites for the List;
2. FURTHER RECALLING that Recommendation 4.2 adopted two Criteria of a general nature: i) Criteria for representative or unique wetlands; ii) General criteria based on plants and animals; and Specific criteria based on waterfowl, together with Guidelines for Application of the Criteria;
3. NOTING that Resolution VI.2 on “Adoption of Specific Criteria Based on Fish for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance”, discussed at Technical Session E of the present meeting, includes in its Annex detailed guidelines on application of the criteria based on fish, which are of great value, especially for developing countries;
4. FURTHER NOTING that identification of wetlands of international importance based on the three existing criteria would be facilitated by adoption of more detailed guidelines like those appended to the criteria based on fish;
5. AWARE that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has suggested the need for a review of the existing criteria, even though Recommendation 4.2 recommended against further amendments to the existing criteria, so as to facilitate establishment of a definite basis for uniform application of the Convention;
6. FURTHER AWARE THAT the Strategic Plan for the Convention (Operational Objective 6.3) calls for the Ramsar criteria to be kept under review by the Conference of the Parties and the STRP;
7. NOTING that papers presented at Technical Session E also call for a review of the criteria and expansion of the guidelines; and
8. FURTHER NOTING the references in the Strategic Plan (Action 6.2.3) to “wetland types currently under-represented on the Ramsar List, and, in particular, when appropriate, coral reefs, mangroves, sea-grass beds, and peatlands” and the content of Resolution VI.5 on subterranean karst wetlands, Recommendations 6.1 on peatlands and 6.7 on coral reefs and associated ecosystems, whose application may require additional criteria and guidelines;

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9. REQUESTS the STRP, in cooperation with relevant experts and partner organizations, and with the assistance of the Bureau, to review the existing criteria and revise the guidelines in the light of Operational Objective 6.3 of the Strategic Plan, of discussions at Technical Session E, and of recommendations on wetland types currently under-represented on the Ramsar List;
10. CALLS ON the STRP in their work to take into account cultural values and/or benefits derived from wetlands;
11. FURTHER REQUESTS that the results of this review be presented to the Standing Committee and submitted for consideration and possible approval to the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties; and
12. DIRECTS the STRP to consider the feasibility of designating Ramsar sites on the basis of important natural hydrological functions, such as groundwater recharge or water quality improvement.