

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.5: INCLUSION OF SUBTERRANEAN KARST WETLANDS AS A WETLAND TYPE UNDER THE RAMSAR CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

1. RECALLING that the Preamble to the Convention recognizes the “fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes and as habitats supporting a characteristic flora and fauna”;
2. FURTHER RECALLING that for the purpose of the Convention, Article 1.1 recognizes wetlands as areas with “water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt...”;
3. AWARE that Article 2.2 of the Convention determines that wetlands should be selected for the List of Wetlands of International Importance on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology;
4. RECOGNIZING that some subterranean cave and karst systems provide natural underground wetlands and constitute a resource of ecological, cultural, scientific, aesthetic and recreational value, providing an environment for specialist vertebrate and invertebrate species and in many cases being the groundwater source for otherwise arid areas;
5. RECALLING Recommendation 4.7 which calls for the use of the “wetland classification system” to describe “wetland type” when “presenting information for the Ramsar Database and as appropriate in other contexts”;
6. ACKNOWLEDGING the need for the Convention to continue to promote the use of a standardized wetland classification system; and
7. NOTING that the current wetland classification as provided in Annex 2B to Recommendation 4.7 does not include subterranean karst or cave wetlands;

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8. DECIDES that subterranean karst and cave hydrological systems shall be added to the Ramsar wetland classification system; and
9. URGES Contracting Parties to assess the significance of karst and cave wetland systems within their territories and to consider their designation for the List.