

"Wetlands: water, life, and culture"

**8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002

Resolution VIII.12

Enhancing the wise use and conservation of mountain wetlands

1. ASSOCIATING ITSELF with the celebration of 2002 as the United Nations International Year of Mountains – in the run-up to 2003 as the UN International Year of Freshwater – and WELCOMING the broad extent of international cooperation on mountains, including relevant bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements;
2. RECALLING that at COP5 (1993) the Contracting Parties adopted Resolution 5.6 *Additional Guidance for application of the wise use concept* and AWARE that, referring to the local level, the Guidance states: "In order to achieve wise use of wetlands, it is necessary to attain a balance that ensures the maintenance of all wetlands types through activities that can range from strict protection all the way to active intervention, including restoration";
3. FURTHER RECALLING that Action 5.2.5 of the Convention's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 encouraged Contracting Parties to promote protection measures for Ramsar sites and other wetlands of small size or particular sensitivity, in line with COP5 Recommendation 5.3 on *Essential character of wetlands and the need for zonation related to wetland reserves*;
4. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Resolution VII.11, which adopted the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, and NOTING that the first objective for the Ramsar List, as expressed in the Strategic Framework, is: "To establish national networks of Ramsar sites in each Contracting Party which fully represent the diversity of wetlands and their key ecological and hydrological functions";
5. FURTHER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that Operational Objective 6.2 of the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 was "to increase the area of wetland designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, particularly for wetland types that are under-represented either at global or national level" and that the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 adopted by Resolution VIII.25 of the present meeting underlines the priority to be given to designation of further wetland types under-represented in the List;
6. RECOGNIZING that mountain and high-altitude wetlands include a wide range of lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, peatlands and karst systems, including the meltwater channels flowing from glaciers and snowfields, and that such wetlands vary greatly in size and permanence;
7. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that mountain and high-altitude wetlands play an especially important role in capturing and retaining rainwater and/or snow and ice melt, releasing water progressively and therefore acting as suppliers and regulators of water for entire river basins, and TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that many such wetland systems also provide

sustainable sources of mineral water, some of which are of national or international economic significance;

8. ALSO RECOGNIZING the value of these wetlands, of relatively recent origin, as mountain ecosystems with rich biodiversity, including varied and particular species communities and endemic species, and that these wetlands can represent true biogeographical enclaves within zones or regions with arid or semiarid climate;
9. STRESSING that mountain wetlands can yield valuable information for reconstructing palaeoenvironments through sediment records, and for the early detection of local, regional and global changes;
10. CONSCIOUS that mountain wetlands have traditionally supported human communities (e.g., through the provision of drinking water for people and livestock and energy from fast-flowing streams and rivers), and that in many cases the biological richness of these wetlands depends on their continued sustainable management;
11. CONCERNED that mountain ecosystems are particularly fragile and vulnerable to external pressures and NOTING that high altitude wetlands in many parts of the world are suffering adverse impacts due to unsustainable human practices, especially modifications of natural water courses, certain forms of intensive tourism, agriculture, grazing, and forestry;
12. FURTHER CONCERNED that climate change is resulting in the shrinkage of snowfields and glaciers in many mountain ranges and that this is leading to rapid changes in the distribution and functioning of high-altitude wetlands, with negative implications for downstream river systems; and
13. NOTING that mountain and high-altitude wetlands are generally under-represented in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, with only a few Contracting Parties having designated such sites;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

14. CALLS UPON Contracting Parties, the Convention's International Organization Partners, and other interested bodies, to recognize the hydrological, biological, cultural and socio-economic importance of mountain and high altitude wetlands and to take appropriate and timely actions for improving awareness and understanding of their functions and values;
15. URGES relevant Contracting Parties, International Organization Partners, and the Ramsar Bureau to share information, expertise and experience concerning the study, conservation and wise use of mountain and high altitude wetlands, particularly with a view to strengthening coordination of Ramsar implementation with work underway in the framework of bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements, especially the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and those agreements dealing specifically with mountains, as well as with the initiatives of international organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and REQUESTS the Bureau to report to COP9 on the progress made;

16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to ensure that due attention is given to the role of mountain and high-altitude wetlands, and the importance of their conservation and wise use, in the preparation and implementation of river basin management plans;
17. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to give priority to assessing the conservation status of mountain wetlands, to reviewing the legislation, policies and practices that may be impacting negatively on these important ecosystems, and to taking the necessary actions for stopping and reversing such impacts;
18. INVITES Contracting Parties to develop, as appropriate, national, regional or local strategies and plans for the wise use and conservation of mountain wetlands, in collaboration with other relevant processes; to designate mountain wetlands for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance; and to ensure that effective management plans are developed and applied for these Ramsar sites, as a means of ensuring their conservation and wise use; and
19. INSTRUCTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, in collaboration with interested Contracting Parties, the International Organization Partners, and institutions and individuals with relevant expertise to propose to COP9 amendments to the Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type and other technical documents of the Convention that may be needed to ensure that all mountain wetlands are covered, particularly those associated with glaciers, and REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau, when revising the Ramsar Handbook series following COP8, to take into account specific requirements for the conservation and wise use of mountain wetland systems in all appropriate new volumes of the series.