

"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.35

The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems

1. RECALLING Article 3.1 of the Convention, whereby Contracting Parties have committed themselves to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of wetlands included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory;
2. ALSO RECALLING that under Article 3.2 of the Convention, each Contracting Party has agreed that it will arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference, and to report any such change, without delay, to the Ramsar Bureau;
3. FURTHER RECALLING that in Recommendation 4.8 the Contracting Parties instructed the Ramsar Bureau to maintain the "Montreux Record" of listed sites where change in ecological character has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur; that in Resolution 5.4 they established guidelines for the operation of this Montreux Record and determined that its purpose should be, *inter alia*, to identify priority sites for positive national and international conservation attention; and that in Resolution VI.1 they adopted a revised procedure for its operation;
4. RECOGNIZING the importance under the Convention of assessing and reporting the status and trends in the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands, including through a management planning process, as outlined in Ramsar COP8 DOC. 20;
5. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that through Resolution VIII.8 Contracting Parties have confirmed that Article 3.2 reports should be made for types and causes of adverse, human-induced, change in ecological character in order, *inter alia*, to provide the basis for analysis of status and trends in Ramsar sites in line with Objective 4.1 of the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Resolution VII.11);
6. ALSO RECOGNIZING that through Resolution VIII.1 Contracting Parties have emphasised the critical importance of maintaining water allocations to ensure that wetlands can continue to provide their many values and functions, including, *inter alia*, water retention and purification, groundwater recharge, and the provision of water, food and fiber for people and for the maintenance of global biological diversity;

7. NOTING that wetlands in drylands are of critical importance for the survival of people and biological diversity; and that, through Resolution VIII.33 adopted by this meeting, Contracting Parties have recognized the particular importance of temporary pools and their unique biological diversity in such regions;
8. AWARE of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ramsar Convention and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification concerning collaborative actions on wetlands in drylands, and WELCOMING the development by the Convention on Biological Diversity of a Collaborative Partnership in the implementation of the CBD's programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands, and the involvement of the Ramsar Convention in this partnership through the 3rd CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan;
9. CONCERNED that frequent and persistent drought in several arid and semi-arid regions of the world, including the Middle East and Central Asia, is having devastating impact on the ecological character of those Ramsar sites that do not normally experience such drought, and ALSO CONCERNED that such droughts will increase the vulnerability of wetlands through increasing competing demands of agricultural irrigation, energy generation, and human and livestock consumption for the water resources upon which they depend;
10. AWARE that, as outlined in document COP8 DOC. 11, climate change projections indicate that other natural disasters, such as storms and floods, may also increase in frequency and severity and that such events can cause serious damage to the ecological character of wetlands;
11. WELCOMING the "Tehran Communiqué" issued by Contracting Parties and other participants at the Ramsar West and Central Asia Subregional meeting, held on 3-5 February 2002, in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, which recognized the impact of drought on a considerable number of major wetlands in the region; affirmed the importance of confronting all the underlying causes of wetlands degradation, and emphasised, in order to increase the effectiveness and utility of the Montreux Record, the necessity to address, in addition to human-induced changes, naturally-induced changes in the ecological character of wetlands, as well as the need to develop monitoring and assessment of such changes; and
12. MINDFUL of the significance of synergies with the other multilateral environmental agreements with a particular focus on the impacts of drought; namely the United National Convention to Combat Desertification and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

13. UNDERLINES the devastating impacts of drought in areas where it is not normally experienced, and other natural disasters, on the ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance and other wetlands in affected countries;
14. URGES Contracting Parties affected by drought to seek to maintain, as far as is practicable, the continued allocation of water to Ramsar sites and other wetlands in accordance with their natural hydrological regimes, so as to ensure that they can continue

to provide their full range of values and functions for people and biological diversity, as called for in Resolution VIII.1;

15. REQUESTS affected Contracting Parties to monitor and assess the impacts of drought in areas where it is not normally experienced, and other natural disasters, on the ecological character of Ramsar sites and other wetlands and on the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous peoples dependent upon these wetlands within their territory and, for designated Ramsar sites, to report this to the Ramsar Bureau so that this information can be made available to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to assist in its reporting to COP9 on the status and trends in the ecological character of sites in the Ramsar List, as called for in Resolution VIII.8;
16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to report to the Ramsar Bureau, in accordance with Article 3.2, the impact of drought and other natural disasters on the ecological character of Ramsar sites, including the consequences of people's responses to natural disasters, in line with the confirmation in Resolution VIII.8 that such reports should be made for types and causes of adverse, human-induced, change in ecological character; and
17. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties with Ramsar sites affected by drought or other natural disasters to use the mechanisms and benefits of the Montreux Record by placing such sites that are in need of priority conservation action on the Record and, as appropriate, seeking national and international assistance to support their conservation action.