

“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.39

High Andean wetlands as strategic ecosystems

1. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Resolutions adopted by this meeting of the Conference on *Guidelines for global action on peatlands* (Resolution VIII.17), *Additional guidance for identifying and designating under-represented wetland types as Wetlands of International Importance* (Resolution VIII.11), *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions* (Resolution VIII.5), *Climate change and wetlands: impacts, adaptation and mitigation* (Resolution VIII.3), and *Enhancing the wise use and conservation of mountain wetlands* (Resolution VIII.12), all of which are relevant to the conservation and wise use of high Andean wetlands;
2. CONSCIOUS of the fact that the High Andean ecosystems located in paramo formations, including Central American páramos puna and *jalca*, among others, contain important wetland systems such as glaciers, lagoons, wet grasslands, *bofedales*, high-altitude *vegas*, salt pans and peat bogs, which have high ecological, social and cultural value;
3. FURTHER CONSCIOUS of the strategic value of High Andean wetlands as regulators and sources of water for consumption, irrigation, and generation of electricity, and as ecosystems of high biodiversity, habitat for species of endangered fauna and flora, centres of endemism, space for tourism activities, and living space for several peasant communities, local populations and indigenous peoples, among others;
4. RECOGNIZING that most cities and a large part of farm production in Andean countries and other countries of the subregion benefit from the High Andean river basins, including their wetland systems, as their main source of water for several purposes;
5. AWARE of the vulnerability and fragility of High Andean wetlands to climate change and pressure generated by productive activities such as intensive agriculture and livestock grazing, uncontrolled burning, mining, forest activities, over-extraction of water from endorheic basins, introduction of exotic and invasive species, and unregulated tourism;
6. RECOGNIZING that the conservation of High Andean wetlands makes it possible to regulate water systems at different scales, and to improve the quality of life for both the human communities associated with these ecosystems and the urban areas benefiting from their environmental services;
7. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that High Andean wetlands are not receiving adequate attention at local, national, regional and international levels, so as to facilitate their conservation and sustainable use as a benefit of the Andean population and for maintenance of the integrity of these fragile ecosystems;
8. RECALLING that the high-mountain ecosystems and their associated wetlands also form part of the area of activities of other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the

Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Migratory Species;

9. RECOGNIZING that there are initiatives underway related to the High Andean ecosystems and their associated wetlands, such as those of the International Working Group on Páramos (Grupo Páramo) involving governmental and non-governmental organizations, research centres, and representatives of the private sector in the countries with páramos and other countries with similar ecosystems, as well as the High Andes Flamingos Conservation Group (GCFA), an initiative of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru made up of governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and universities of the four countries, which carry out joint activities that incorporate the relevant aspects for the conservation of flamingos, within the framework of the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species;
10. RECOGNIZING ALSO the interest of the Ramsar International Organization Partners in the conservation of these wetlands, considering them as ecosystems that are strategic and the habitat of threatened or endangered species;
11. TAKING NOTE that the Ramsar Bureau supported the World Congress of Páramos, held in Paipa, Colombia, in May 2002, which adopted the Declaration of Paipa, defining the guiding approach for international work regarding páramos;
12. ALSO TAKING NOTE that the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains and 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater; and
13. RECALLING the importance given to mountain ecosystems in the Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), in COP6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (The Hague, 2002), and in the preparations for the 2003 World Water Forum;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

14. INVITES the Contracting Parties concerned to establish specific work programmes for High Andean wetlands and the basins fed by them, in order to preserve their valuable biodiversity, their function as regulators of water, and as living space of many local and peasant communities and indigenous peoples; and ENCOURAGES them to give priority to reviewing their legislation, policies and incentives directly or indirectly related to High Andean wetlands and to prepare additional national strategies designed to ensure their wise use and conservation, duly integrated into their National Wetland Policies, National Biodiversity Strategies, National Development Plans, and other similar instruments;
15. REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau, with the support of the Standing Committee, to propose a joint strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of High Andean ecosystems involving the Ramsar Convention and other related conventions and initiatives;
16. ALSO REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau, in cooperation with the concerned Parties, to seek the support of already-established working groups related to these ecosystems, such as the International Working Group on Páramos (Grupo Páramo) and the High Andes

Flamingos Conservation Group (GCFA), as agents for coordination and technical support for promoting the synergies sought in the previous paragraph;

17. INVITES the Ramsar International Organization Partners – BirdLife International, IUCN, Wetlands International, and WWF – as well as other partners and collaborators of the Ramsar Convention, to support the Contracting Parties in the design and implementation of joint activities for the conservation and sustainable management of the High Andean wetlands;
18. INVITES those Contracting Parties from other continents with mountain ecosystems similar to those of the High Andean region to share information and experiences on the management, conservation and sustainable use of these important ecosystems;
19. ALSO INVITES the Contracting Parties to develop planning mechanisms to improve the practices related to the wise use of water in high altitude environments;
20. REQUESTS the Contracting Parties to undertake the necessary measures to get to know, assess and recover for present use all ancestral practices of indigenous peoples that are compatible with environment protection; and
21. URGES the Contracting Parties concerned to identify additional High Andean wetlands in their countries for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.